

“Blackness” in Pentecostal Spirituality: Epistemological and Hermeneutical Sources for Socially Prophetic Theology

By: Antipas Lewis Harris

December 12, 2019

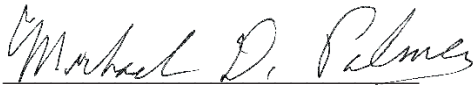
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy

St. Thomas University
Miami Gardens, Florida

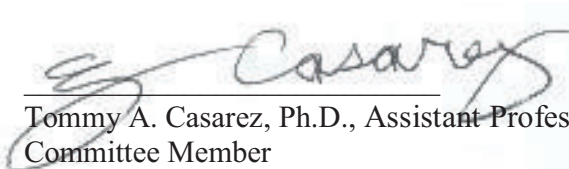
Approved:



Bryan Froehle, Ph.D., Professor, St. Thomas University
Committee Chair



Michael P. Palmer, Ph.D., Professor, Regent University
Committee Member



Tommy A. Casarez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Vanguard University
Committee Member

ProQuest Number:27736533

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 27736533

Published by ProQuest LLC (2020). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All Rights Reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Copyright 2020 by Antipas Lewis Harris
All Rights Reserved

Copyright Acknowledgments Page

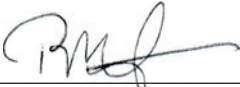
St. Thomas University

I, Antipas Lewis Harris, understand that I am solely responsible for the content of this dissertation and its use of copyrighted materials. All copyright infringements and issues are solely the responsibility of myself as the author of this dissertation and not St. Thomas University, its programs, or libraries.



Signature of Author

February 20, 2020
Date



Witness (Bryan Froehle)

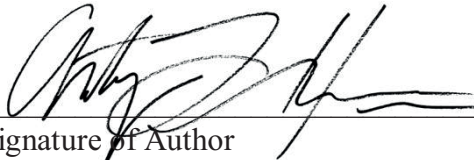
February 20, 2020
Date

St. Thomas University Library Release Form

“Blackness” in Pentecostal Spirituality:
Epistemological and Hermeneutical Sources for Socially Prophetic Theology


Antipas Lewis Harris

I understand that U.S. Copyright Law protects this dissertation against unauthorized use. By my signature below, I am giving permission to St. Thomas University Library to place this dissertation in its collections in both print and digital forms for open access to the wider academic community. I am also allowing the Library to photocopy and provide a copy of this dissertation for the purpose of interlibrary loans for scholarly purposes and to migrate it to other forms of media for archival purposes.



Signature of Author

February 20, 2020
Date



Witness (Bryan Froehle)

February 20, 2020
Date


Dissertation Manual Acknowledgement Form

By my signature below, I Antipas Lewis Harris assert that I have read the dissertation publication manual, that my dissertation complies with the University's published dissertation standards and guidelines, and that I am solely responsible for any discrepancies between my dissertation and the publication manual that may result in my dissertation being returned by the library for failure to adhere to the published standards and guidelines within the dissertation manual.

<http://www.stu.edu/Portals/library/HowTo/docs/Dissertation-Manual.pdf>


Signature of Author

February 20, 2020
Date


Signature of Chair

February 20, 2020
Date

Abstract

The dissertation addresses the integration of epistemology, hermeneutics, and black folk religion as an untapped theological source in black Pentecostalism. The discussion will explore narratives embedded in black Pentecostalism that will ultimately inform contemporary leadership formation. Through hermeneutical insight, the results will dispel the myth that black Pentecostalism is a spiritual “alternative” to social justice involvement. The results show that dialogue between James Cone’s sources for black theology and black Pentecostalism advance scholarship on black Pentecostal hermeneutics. As such, black Pentecostal leadership hermeneutics support faith formation.

Early socially prophetic theologians left a treasure trove of leadership hermeneutics and models for public engagement. These models are built on the legacies of four pastors who qualify as pioneers in black Pentecostalism. Biographic highlights suggest that narrative sources can constitute theological authority and innovative hermeneutics can serve as models for engaging public theology. The practical application of this research will ensure a black Pentecostal voice at the table of theological discourse, install scholarship as a denominational priority, and inform a hermeneutic wherein blackness is affirmed as a valid theological source in the integration of epistemology, hermeneutics, and black folk religion.

Keywords: practical theology, public theology, spirituality, black Pentecostalism, hermeneutics, epistemology, social justice

Acknowledgments

All glory to God! I wish to thank St. Thomas University for the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies. I am grateful to the outstanding faculty: Bryan T. Froehle, Ph.D. program director, Sr. Ondina Cortes, Mary Carter Waren, Nathaniel Samuel, and Jennifer Kryszak. Their wisdom pushed me to go deeper in theological reflection; their seminars sanctuaries for inspiration and challenge. In so doing, they not only shaped my thinking but aided significantly in my spiritual and theological formation.

Most importantly, I wish to express gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee: Bryan T. Froehle, chair, and Michael D. Palmer and Tommy A. Casarez, advisors. I sincerely appreciate your support and guidance. I also owe a debt of gratitude to family and friends who encouraged me to keep pushing forward when life's distractions almost dissuaded me from continuing this journey. Now, I am glad I stayed the course. Lastly, I am grateful for Dr. Monifa A. Jumanne, who spent countless hours editing this work.

Table of Contents

Copyright Acknowledgments Page iii

St. Thomas University Library Release Form..... iv

Dissertation Manual Acknowledgement Formv

Abstract vi

Acknowledgments vii

Table of Contents viii

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION.....1

 Research Questions..... 1

 Significance of the Study2

 Black Folk Religion as Antecedent6

 The Practical Theology Query7

 Hermeneutics.....7

 Black Pentecostalism as Public Theology8

 Models for Pentecostal Socially Prophetic Theology8

 Summary of the Study8

 Research Conclusions9

CHAPTER TWO. BLACK FOLK RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION 10

 Spirituality and Black Folk Religion 11

 Narrative Identity..... 12

 Story-Linking 19

 Story-Sharing..... 20

 Black Folklore 20

Catchphrases.....	21
Spirituals	23
Radical Worship Expressions.....	30
Research Conclusions	35
CHAPTER THREE. A BLACK PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC	36
Introduction: Epistemology in Black Pentecostalism.....	36
The Challenge of a Single Hermeneutic	38
A Case for Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics.....	44
Cone’s Sources	47
Black Experience	47
Black History.....	51
Black Culture.....	54
Revelation.....	56
Scripture	59
Tradition.....	62
The Missing Source: The Holy Spirit	63
Research Conclusions	65
CHAPTER FOUR. SOURCES: PENTECOSTAL PUBLIC THEOLOGY.....	67
Introduction: Narratives as Theological Sources	67
Socially Prophetic Leadership at the Margins.....	69
Origins: The Black Church and Public Theology	71
Socially Prophetic Leadership in Action	74
The Kofi Model	74

The Lawson Model	78
The Brazier Model	85
The Daughtry Model.....	89
Research Conclusions	94
CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSION: A PRAXIS-ORIENTED PUBLIC THEOLOGY ...	96
Introduction	96
Blackness as Contextual Theology	96
Praxis in Faith and Life.....	96
Models for Public Theology.....	99
A Leadership Hermeneutic	101
Conclusion.....	103
BIBLIOGRAPHY	105

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Research Questions

This dissertation addresses the integration of epistemology, hermeneutics,¹ and folk religion as an untapped theological resource for black Pentecostalism. Despite its perceived relevance to contemporary black theology, this integration has received little scholarly attention as a substantive resource. Yet, research has shown that “blackness,”² that is, the African American historical-sociological experience, is not only “conceptual” and “normative,”³ but also theology-laden, an overlooked source of authenticity in praxis-oriented public theology in black Pentecostalism.

Blackness is defined, first, as engendered subjection and exploitation of a people whose identity is traceable to a native origin, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. Forced into the social construct of race, blackness was formed as black people interwove indigenous religious beliefs and practices with their own. From this merging came narratives, tropes, symbolism, and behavior that black people constructed.

1. This study assigns new connotations to the terms “epistemology” and “hermeneutics,” which are taken from African American history, experience and tradition. Scholars who have participated in revisioning epistemology are Bonaventura De Sousa Santos. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (New York: Routledge, 2014) and Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*. Translated from Portuguese by Robert R. Barr (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

2. See Angela Onwuachi-Willig, *According to Our Hearts: Rhinelander V. Rhinelander and the Law of the Multiracial Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 96; 254. Also see Angela Onwuachi-Willig, “Race and Racial Identity Are Social Constructs,” in *The New York Times*, September 6, 2016. Anthropologist Audrey Smedley argues that race evolved from the 17th century and “was institutionalized beginning in the 18th century as a worldview, a set of culturally created attitudes and beliefs about human group differences.” Audrey Smedley, “Origin of the Idea of Race,” in *Anthropology Newsletter* (PBS, November 1997). See Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 251. See, Lionel McPherson and Tommie Shelby, “Blackness and Blood: Interpreting African American Identity,” in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Spring 2004) (32) (2), 171–192.

3. Tommie Shelby, “Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?” in *Ethics* 112 (2) (January), 239–247.

Secondly, blackness is a possessed identity, owned and formed among people with a common experience; it is nationalistic in that it consists of common political solidarity and collective resolve. Black political solidarity as to do with “identification, special concern, loyalty, and trust”⁴ among people whose original experience was the force of sustained 17th century white superiority.

This work recognizes the ambiguity of “blackness” as what Angela Onwuachi-Willig calls the “fluidity” of racial groups.⁵ Shelby’s layers of “thick blackness” are relevant to this exploration, as well. She identifies these layers as: 1) the *racialist* conception, 2) the *ethnic* conception, 3) the *cultural* conception, 4) the *kinship* conception, and 5) “black solidarity” as normative to racial justice. Accordingly, this exposition will explore “blackness” as a theological source by asking:

RQ1. What hermeneutical insights from the African American experience of slavery and segregation were relevant in the formation of Pentecostal theology?⁶

RQ2. What authentic sources are inherent in black Pentecostal public theological interests?

Significance of the Study

Two levels of discussion define the significance of this study. The first level has to do with historical expressions in African American Christianity. The other is the theological significance of blackness in Pentecostal formation. Anthropologist Zora

4. Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 125.

5. Onwuachi-Willig, *According to Our Hearts*, 96.

6. Pentecostal refers to a theology sparked in 1906 with African American leadership. An assembly of believers experienced the move of the Holy Spirit with accompanying episodes of glossolalia that mirrored the idea of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Neale Hurston observed that “sanctified churches”⁷ preserved indigenous African life, symbols, and religious practices that faded within some developments of the Black Church. Black holiness churches have been called “sanctified” since the late 19th century, stemming from the Wesleyan Holiness Movement. Throughout the 20th century, black Pentecostal churches that evolved out of the Azusa Street Revival were popularly known as “sanctified” churches. Their adherents were called “the saints.” These churches evolved from a wide range of denominational groupings. While there are some differences among them, this dissertation refers to the tradition as a whole. As a whole, sanctified churches maintained religious distinctives that may be traced to African culture and practice.

Hurston makes her point in light of contrasting expressions in other denominations, e.g., African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME), and black Baptists, which kept fewer of these elements as part of the faith expression. She makes a direct connection between black Pentecostalism and the African heritage that formed folk religion on slave plantations. Hurston explains that the enshrining of black folk religion is more than a cultural expression, and notes that, “The whole movement of the Sanctified Church is... a new era of spiritual making.”⁸ Spiritual making is at the core of black Pentecostal formation. Hurston points to the need for

7. See Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “‘Together and in Harness:’ Women’s Traditions in the Sanctified Church,” in *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 630]. Zora Neale Hurston explains, “The Saints, or the Sanctified Church is a revitalizing element in Negro music and religion.” [Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*. Berkeley, CA: Turtle Island Foundation, 1981), 105]. Estrelida Y. Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011), 106.

8. Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, 104.

deeper study to ascertain epistemological and hermeneutical insights for the future of Pentecostal theology.

Secondly, blackness as a theological source is not new. Liberation theologian James H. Cone leveraged a claim against mainstream theology, noting an implicit “whiteness” is at play. Whiteness, as an unnamed but present theological category, enabled the institution of slavery and subsequent segregation of the Jim Crow era. A son and preacher within the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Cone falls short of connecting theological blackness to the Pentecostal movement. Throughout the 20th century, AME members were thought to represent a more erudite expression of the Black Church. The focus was more on formal education that maintained a more subdued worship style than that of Pentecostals.

Pentecostal scholars have peered deeper than mere rhythm of sound and motion to glean more theological insights from the sanctified church tradition. For example, Renae C. A. Brathwaite draws attention to the significance of blackness in Pentecostal founder William Seymour’s theology in his 2013 dissertation.⁹ Yet, Brathwaite does not elaborate on blackness as a sustained source inherent in Pentecostal development.

David D. Daniels contends that black Pentecostals, as did black Baptists, drew upon elements of black cultural heritage in religious expression.¹⁰ Daniels also notes strands of continuity between the development of the Church of God in Christ denomination and its black Baptist antecedent, from which many Pentecostal founders

9. See Renae C. A. Brathwaite, “Seymour, the ‘New’ Theologian: An Investigation into the Theology of an Early Pentecostal Pioneer” (PhD diss., Regent University, 2013).

10. See David D. Daniels, III, “The cultural renewal of slave religion: Charles Price Jones and the emergence of the holiness movement in Mississippi” (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1992).

emerged. Additionally, in 2016, Dale M. Coulter published “Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Black Consciousness.”¹¹ His premise is that early 20th century black culture was prominent in framing Pentecostal social consciousness amid the harsh realities of segregation. While Coulter is interested in discovering elements of blackness in Pentecostal theology, he shifts focus to the historical presence of black social consciousness in the movement and re-associates black Pentecostal theology with Wesleyan holiness. Coulter implies that black Pentecostalism includes social consciousness but aligns his insights with the rudiments of Wesleyan holiness theology. Coulter falls short of naming black consciousness as a dominant theological source, more than merely a noticeable and valuable feature of black social life among Pentecostals. This study supports blackness as a source fundamental to black Pentecostal thought and practice; it is a theological analysis of relational epistemology and hermeneutics that has not yet been sufficiently unearthed in Pentecostal theology.

Traditional scholarship on black spirituality emphasizes black experience, black culture, and black history, with minimal emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Diana Hayes’s work on black womanist spirituality sheds light on the relationship between black life and the Holy Spirit in black spirituality. Reflecting on black history, Hayes explains that the Holy Spirit was at work in the African American experience, forming spiritual connectedness with the African heritage. She posits that this transatlantic connectedness as facilitated by the Holy Spirit “forged the strength which enabled them to ‘move on up

11. See Dale M. Coulter, “Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Black Consciousness,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 25, no. 1 (April 2016): 74-89.

a little higher.”¹² This current study bridges black spirituality with the African American experience, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Black spirituality and baptism of the Holy Spirit were then linked as expressions of God’s work amid God’s people.

God’s self-disclosure spans the African American experience such that spiritual blackness is a manifestation God’s self as expressed through individual and collective spirituality. Thus, Pentecostalism cannot be regarded as a mere reliving of Acts 2. Scholars have long noted the Wesleyan influence on Pentecostalism, yet little work has been devoted to the black overtones in Pentecostal formation. For example, William Seymour possessed little formal education, yet espoused an epistemology and a hermeneutic cultivated in his primary environment, the black community, during the post-slavery era.

While blackness may have infused early Pentecostalism, it matured among black Pentecostal churches when segregation lured whites away from racial integration. The black Pentecostal movement became not just a work of personal spiritual piety, but also communal spirituality. Thus, bearing bold witness to faith was inherent in the maturation of black Pentecostalism.

Black Folk Religion as Antecedent

Chapter two investigates black folk religion as lived faith and expressed spirituality. It presents theological rudiments embedded in traditional black Pentecostal spirituality. This chapter sheds light on the dynamics of black Pentecostal spiritual

12. Diana L. Hayes, *No Crystal Stair: Womanist Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Obis Press, 2016), xvi.

formation which influenced Pentecostal development and concludes with proposals for ongoing praxis that integrates black folk religion and black Pentecostalism.

The Practical Theology Query

Chapter two situates this dissertation within the field of practical theology. Gerben Heitink notes that, “A practical theology, which chooses its point of departure in the experience of human beings and ... [the] church and society, is indeed characterized by a methodology that takes empirical data with utter seriousness, takes these as its starting point and keeps them in mind as it develops its theory.”¹³ This chapter extracts previously overlooked sources within Pentecostal spirituality. Drawn from lived experience, these sources offer valuable insight into faith formation.

Hermeneutics

Building on the wisdom of black folk religion, Chapter three invites a closer look at Pentecostal hermeneutics. The discussion centers on whether or not black Pentecostalism possesses a distinctively “black” hermeneutic. James Cone’s theological sources are placed in dialogue with black Pentecostal practice with hermeneutical insights for students to consider. Cone’s sources reveal insights on the role of black life and the experience of the Holy Spirit in shaping black Pentecostalism. Importantly, this chapter presents blackness as a theological source that correlates with other sources and fosters the integration of epistemology, hermeneutics, and folk religion.

In summary, two levels of insight pertinent to Pentecostal scholarship are offered. On one level, authentic scholarship calls for dialogue between Cone’s sources and black

13. Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology*, translated by Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 7.

Pentecostalism to advance the field of black Pentecostal hermeneutics. On another, it refutes the notion that black Pentecostalism functions to evade social justice.

Black Pentecostalism as Public Theology

Chapters one through three point to theological sources that framed epistemology and hermeneutics in black Pentecostalism. Chapter four, however, explores interactions between black and white Pentecostals, particularly as relations evolved during the years of legal enslavement, commonly known as slavery, the subsequent legal segregation known as Jim Crow, and the *de facto* segregation that followed. One feature of note is that early black Pentecostals were snubbed not only by white Pentecostals, but by some black Pentecostals, as well. Consequently, at the traditional table of theological discourse, black Pentecostals have been notably absent.

Models for Pentecostal Socially Prophetic Theology

The question of theological authority in black Pentecostalism can be answered, in part, by its contributions to theology in general, and to liberation theology, in particular. Black theologians in the socially prophetic tradition left a treasure trove of models for public engagement and leadership hermeneutics. Research has led to the discovery of narratives that can serve as a valuable source of theological authenticity, as revealed through four pioneers in the black Pentecostal movement. Their leadership narratives reveal potential sources of 1) historical authority within the black Pentecostal tradition and 2) innovative hermeneutics as valid models for engaging public theology.

Summary of the Study

Chapter five locates this work as praxis-oriented public theology. Its theological approach presupposes intelligent, responsible action is the utmost level of black

Pentecostal consciousness.^{14 15} It illustrates theologizing from the marginalized experience with reflection on social concerns. The praxis-oriented¹⁶ models illustrate concern for all oppressed people. While Pentecostalism is known for a “separation-from-the-world” theology, the illustrations in this chapter represent a call to action.

Research Conclusions

Socially prophetic black Pentecostals have tended to approach social justice struggles with the conviction that the Holy Spirit is needed to bind the spirit of oppression, to transform diabolical systems into mechanisms for common good, and to liberate people from societal structures that preclude abundant wellbeing in Christ.¹⁷ In black Pentecostalism, deliverance, transformation, and liberation are held to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, a socially prophetic black pastor is empowered by the Spirit to lead from the amalgamation of epistemological, hermeneutical and folk religion. In short, the black-led Pentecostal movement that began in 1906, known as the Azusa Street Revival, cultivated spiritual grounds with tools from black folk religion. While indigenous spirituality in the hands of Jesus Christ opened the door for Spirit baptism, it also opened a door for Spirit-grounded socially prophetic ministry.

14. Stephen B. Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 71 and 73.

15. See Stephen B. Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 78.

16. Bevens, 78.

17. Ref. John 10:10: “ἐγὼ ἦλθον ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχωσιν καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν.

(“I came in order that you will have life and have advantage...”), Original translation by Antipas

L. Harris.

CHAPTER TWO. BLACK FOLK RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION¹

Introduction: Background of Black Folk Religion

Historically, black people have drawn from the wells of spirituality transported from Africa, the Motherland, and mingled with a unique vision of the biblical narratives concerning deliverance from oppression. Early on, the practice of integrating spirituality with religion became what some scholars refer to as “black folk religion.”² African American tribal identity was formed by a common slave experience in America; Gadamer’s “fusion of the horizon” helpful to understand how tribes fused into a new entity: black American slaves. Enslaved people interwove Christian narratives with African wisdom and expressions, giving birth to what Andrews and musicologist Pearl Williams-Jones refer to as black folk religion. The black folk religious tradition, as a whole, was born out of slavery.³ With roots in Africa and the Middle Passage, black folk religion gave meaning for Africans as they struggled to survive the brutality of slavery and racial oppression in America. This folk-based religious tradition passed to black churches a distinctive spiritual nurture that has been foundational to black people’s humanity and the fight for human and civil rights.

Black Pentecostalism, born during the era of enforced segregation, inherited important spiritual strands. For more than a century, sanctified congregations have played a significant role in preserving black spirituality. This chapter extrapolates theological

1. A version of this chapter appears in “Black Folk Religion in Black Holiness Pentecostalism,” *the Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. 28, 1: 103–122 (Brill, 2019).

2. Dale P. Andrews explains that black folk religion reflects the cultural dimensions, communal beliefs, and ways of knowing that involve a contextualized life of faith and meaning.

3. See Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002). Also, see Pearl Williams-Jones, “The Musical Quality of Black Religious Folk Ritual, in *Spirit: A Journal Incident to Black Pentecostalism* 1.1 (1977), 23.

implications in traditional black Pentecostal⁴ spirituality to reveal proposals that enhance spiritual formation in life and practice.

Spirituality and Black Folk Religion

Black folk religion was not an institutional religion with written dogma and canonized pericopes. Over the past century, however, scholars have unearthed related material from former slave accounts, black spirituals, and other primary documents. Johnson shares an account of one slave preacher who points to an experience-based spirituality vibrant in slave life: “I used to wonder what made people shout, but now I don’t. There’s a joy on the inside and it wells up so strong that we can’t keep still. It is fire in the bones.”⁵

This account illustrates the sapient nature of black spirituality: that wisdom and insight emerge from vibrant religious experience. The preacher’s words, “I used to wonder... but now I don’t,” reveal how worship can generate wisdom. Through spiritual experience, slaves discerned God’s presence; it provided escape from inhumane plantation living and deposited a supernatural presence that sustained them.

Slaves often affirmed identity as people of God through songs. Lyrics could encourage as well as convey coded messages: “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen,” “Steal Away,” or “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” Spirituality demonstrated through faith was intrinsic to the development of black churches. Black people had communities and religious tradition. Faith was everything; church was fundamental to black identity

4. Black Pentecostalism, as discussed in this essay, emerged from the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, California.

5. Clifton H. Johnson (editor), *God Struck Me Dead: Voices of Ex-Slaves* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 74.

formation, religious education, and personal development. Sociologist C. Eric Lincoln noted that “church was their school, their forum, their political arena, their social club, their art gallery, their conservatory of music. It was lyceum and gymnasium as well as sanctum sanctorum.”⁶

Narrative Identity

With limited access to literacy, slaves drew heavily upon the dynamics of practical reason (or wisdom) within their narratives. Practical theologian Don S. Browning asserts that at one level practical reason involves narratives and practices that tradition has delivered to us and that surrounds our practical thinking.⁷ No place is this truer than in black history. Collective wisdom framed slaves’ ongoing praxis that produced communal virtues and guidance. This experience-based praxis is not far from Aristotle’s discourse on phronesis in which he argues for communal wisdom as a reliable source of knowledge of lived experience.⁸

From its origins, the Black Church has maintained a relational epistemology and an experience-driven spirituality.⁹ The interconnected nature of epistemology, ontology and spirituality in black social and religious life gives way to black lived worship. In

6. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 93.

7. Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 11.

8. This discussion draws upon Groome’s interpretation of Aristotle’s ‘Living “Three Lives”’ in Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1991), 42.

9. Praxis, as used here, draws upon Groome’s discussion of Aristotle’s “cyclical and holistic” process, an interpretive process that moves back and forth between life experiences and theological resources upon which a given group of people draw inspiration. However, black slaves were already acquainted with experience-based epistemology before western scholars came around to it. So, Thomas H. Groome, and even Martin Heidegger and others must footnote black folk religious tradition in their epistemic-ontological projects. Reference Groome, 44-45.

“lived worship,” black spirituality spans the ongoing narratives of everyday life, suffusing black people with human dignity and faith identity.

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s narrative identity theory helps explain how interconnectedness of black life draws upon black history, relates the journey of black lived experience, and carves out new meaning to cope with the vicissitudes of life.

Ricoeur explains,

Refiguration by narrative confirms this aspect of self-knowledge which goes far beyond the narrative domain in that the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, though the detour of cultural signs of all sorts, which articulate the self in symbolic mediations that already articulate action, among them the narratives of daily life. Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable aspect about knowledge of the self as being an interpretation. Appropriation of the identity of a fictional character by the reader is one of its forms. What the narrative interpretation properly provides is precisely ‘the figure-able’ character of the individual which has for its result, that the self, narratively interpreted, is itself a figured self—a self which figures itself as this or that.¹⁰

Relating Ricoeur’s narrative identity theory to black lived worship tradition involves not only fashioning personhood but also forging a sense of communal belonging, trusting God, and making ethical decisions.

Having come from different African tribes, the shared continental background and collective experience of slavery were fragments from which the new communal identity emerged. African diversity, as well as a shared but complex genius of African

10. Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” *Philosophy Today*, 35, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 80.

distinction, evaded white slave owners. They saw slaves as simply “niggers” from Africa, a commodity for slave labor and commercial enterprise. The shared experiences of slaves from varied African tribes were significant in the formation of black American life.

Notwithstanding, slaves preserved their own humanity over and against pervasive commodification. Indeed, cultivated spirituality kept them sane, fortified their sense of dignity, and shaped a new identity. The depth of such narrative-related spirituality was impermeable to the harsh slave reality. Both everyday life and spirituality generated a distinct religious reservoir deserving of further study. Slaves followed no formal liturgical, ecclesiological, or theological paradigm. The religion of the masters was forced upon them. Ironically, slaves made Christianity their own. Stimulated by antecedent African religious impulses, slaves translated Christianity into a religion they could understand, one that supported them and contributed to the broad narrative with resources for realized mental and spiritual freedom.

Narratives from the perspectives of those who experienced life under slavery and Jim Crow are crucial to understanding early black social philosophy and spirituality. Experience-based religion is a hallmark in Pentecostalism. Narrative theorists have noted that experiences are revelatory; in the case of black life, a unique identity formed during years of inviting God’s help. Ricoeur notes,

Our own existence cannot be separated from the account we can give of ourselves.... It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell about ourselves.¹¹

11. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, V. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 214.

Ricoeur's narrative theory invites black people to tell their stories. Doing so exposes how spirituality permeates all of black life, including worship, family, work, play, joy, suffering and entertainment. Most stories from former slaves intermingle faith and suffering in narratives of life on the plantations. The same is true with black narratives under Jim Crow. God in the good and bad, beautiful and ugly becomes the theological authority for everyday life. Historically, black Christians drew upon narratives for faith formation, and personal and communal identity.

Black spirituality took on involvement in civic and economic interests during years of legal segregation. The first major sociological study of black religion in the United States was W.E. B. DuBois' 1903 *Negro Church*. Dubois contends that black churches were central to both black spiritual needs and black civilization.¹² Churches provided information about public life, the price of cotton, and local entertainment. Spirituality helped navigate the nuances of financial and social responsibility imposed under Jim Crow. This dynamic was new for black people who had lived on plantations and dependent upon masters for livelihood. Now, black religion presented Jesus as a "way maker" and a "bridge over troubled water," "bread" when they were hungry, and "water" when they were thirsty. This illustrates how black churches became central to community formation, connecting seamlessly as a part of its spiritual foundation.

Black social philosophy is the byproduct of a history of varying forms of communal suffering and trust in Jesus Christ that forged a narrative of faith, survival and liberation. Under the laws of segregation, this philosophy became pronounced in black Pentecostalism. Compounded with suffering, the joyous move of the Spirit drew even

12. W.E. B. DuBois, *The Negro Church* (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1903), 5-7.

greater suffering for Pentecostals. Many were cut off from families; local papers alluded to them as “heathens” and other pejorative labels. Whites and blacks worshipping together with a black leader was not a celebrated wonder in racist North American society. Yet, a history of discovering God in oppressive conditions and in worship had equipped believers for whatever they would face. They understood the God of their communally lived and religious experiences to be a God of deliverance.

Phenomenology is helpful in charting the course of black Pentecostal identity development. Ricoeur explains,

The person, understood as a character in a story, is not an entity distinct from his or her ‘experiences.’ Quite the opposite: the person shares the condition of the dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted. *The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.*¹³

Narratives must be received from the perspective of those who live them. It is not something that outsiders can explain in their own ideological categories. Black people evolved as people of God through experiences of twists and turns in their narratives¹⁴ along with God-encounters. Moreover, spirituality in black Pentecostalism is rooted in the deeper discourse of black historical experience.

13. Paul Ricoeur, *Life in Quest of Narrative*, in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 148. The italics are added for emphasis.

14. See, Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity” on the formation of communal and personal identity based on narrative constructs.

Insufficient attention has been given to the narrative-oriented spirituality of early Pentecostalism that drew upon black epistemology. Importantly, the movement was led by sons and daughters of former slaves who continued to live under the harsh conditions of legal racial segregation: lynching, cross burning, church burning, sexual assaults, ridicule, intimidation, and the ubiquitous signage of “Colored Only” and “Whites Only.” Thus, black narrative-oriented spirituality rooted in experience-based epistemology heavily influenced black Pentecostal spirituality. The Azusa Street Revival is generally known as an experience-based move of the Spirit. Whatever William Seymour learned while listening to Charles Parham’s Bible teachings, he then translated into a narrative-based epistemological framework. With little exposure to Western education, Seymour’s epistemology was passed down from his enslaved grandparents. It follows that the experience-based religion birthed at Azusa Street was connected to black ways of knowing.

It is no surprise that the movement attracted black and white people amid life’s ordinary struggles. People brought everyday experience to the worship of a God who entered daily life as He did among slaves. The religious experience of the baptism of the Spirit proved to them that God was not only *with them* but *in them* as he was in Acts 2. The multi-dimensional story of God *with them* and *in them* fashioned their new narrative as people of God. Those who attended the Azusa Street Revival and the denominations that came out of it identify as Pentecostals; they connect personal life with an encounter with a God who transformed their lives as God did at Pentecost in Acts.

The collision between contemporary experience and biblical history has been commonplace among black people since slavery. Biblical stories helped slaves make

sense of their own lives, which might explain why, when Charles Parham visited the revival meeting, he reacted disdainfully to what he saw. He had propositional insight that the Holy Spirit was present in the contemporary world with accompanying gifts; however, without the cultural background of black folk religion, he had no point of reference for the complex ways in which Seymour intuitively linked lived religious experience with Acts 2.

Harding and Raboteau point out that the music slaves left behind reveals that they identified with Israel in Egyptian bondage.¹⁵ As God was with Israel and ultimately brought deliverance, God was with the slaves and would also bring deliverance. Employing biblical narratives as hermeneutical lens helped shape black folk religion. Biblical interpretation was not limited to everyday experiences; this common practice made it easy to interpret religious experience through the biblical lens. The indigenous epistemological intuition made it easy for slaves to relate to Christianity as an experience-based religion. Several slave and former slave accounts explicate that black spirituality was real, so far that they could experience it. For example, former slave Robert Anderson once described the religious experience in the following manner:

The colored people... have a peculiar music of their own... It had to do largely with religion and the words adopted to their quaint melodies were largely of a religious nature. The stories of the Bible were placed into words that would fit the music already used by the colored people... The weird and mysterious music of the religious ceremonies moved old and young alike in a frenzy of religious

15. Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 251 and Vincent Harding, "The Use of the Afro-American Past," in *The Religious Situation*, 1969, ed. Donald R. Cutter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 829–40.

fervor. We had religious dances, which were expressions of the weird, the fantastic, the mysterious, that was felt in all our religious ceremonies.¹⁶

Biblical narratives infused with indigenous African expressions formed black Christian praxis-oriented spirituality. Spiritual praxis separated slave spirituality from both African pagan spirituality and white Christian spirituality, though it drew upon both.

Slave spirituality departed from indigenous African spirituality at a level of belief. For slaves, the intellectual religious framework was oriented toward the God of the Bible. Raboteau explains that for them, the spirit of the Christian God mounted excitable Christian worship rather than pagan ones.¹⁷ The slaves' expression-oriented spirituality departed from their slave masters' religious formation. White spirituality had no place for African ring-shouting and dancing. Just as Charles Parham later called black Pentecostal religious expressions heathenistic, so did white slave masters and the broader white Church in the days of slavery. However, slaves linked spirituality to the Christian faith the masters passed on to them, making the faith their own.

Story-Linking

Christian education scholar Anne E. Streaty Wimberly sheds light from another angle, pointing out that “story-linking” is characteristic of black identity. She says,

Story-linking is comprised of four primary phases: (1) engaging the everyday story, (2) engaging the Christian faith story in the Bible, (3) engaging Christian

16. Robert Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence: Memoirs of Robert Anderson, Ex-Slave*, ed. Daisy Anderson Leonard (Steamboat Springs, CO: The Steamboat Pilot, 1927), 24–26, 31.

17. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 64.

faith stories from the African American heritage, and (4) engaging in Christian ethical decision making.¹⁸

The four phases of story-linking speak to the faith-formational dynamics encoded in much of black culture. Early formation of black identity and culture in North America was inseparable from developmental contrivance of biblical story-linking. This constituted a narrative approach to theology in action. Consistent with insights from Wimberly on narrative faith formation and narrative-based theology, black Pentecostals understand the faith community as a continuation of the biblical story that is animated by the same power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. In short, black Pentecostal faith formation and theological structures may be properly described as narrative-laden lived spirituality and theology.

Story-Sharing

Narrative formation is also expressed through story-sharing, in which one believer shares narrative-laden spiritual insights. Story-sharing may be understood as a bottom-up dynamic of Christian formation. Narrative sharing fortifies solidarity in community and serves as a pedagogical apparatus. The Testimony Service in sanctified churches is such an expression. During these services, individuals “testify” to the goodness of God in some way. Sermons interspersed with catchphrases and folk songs are exemplary of story-sharing in the black folk tradition. In the early development of black Pentecostalism, these expressions characterized the sanctified worship experience.

Black Folklore

18. Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 26.

Black religion merged with folklore, catch-phrases and coded language in music and sermons that captured experience-based intelligence. Catch-phrases and music became pedagogical resources for passing on the wisdom of the people. Adages such as, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way,” and “God won’t put more on you than you can bear,” captured lived interpretations that gradually evolved into the enduring folklore of shared praxis.

Catchphrases

Catchphrases in black religion capture symbolic meaning characteristic of black folklore. They contain communal wisdom passed down, mainly through oral tradition. Hurston notes that historically, black language is often action-oriented and pictorial; it is full of metaphor and simile.¹⁹ Examples include “chop-axe,” “sitting-chair,” and “cook-pot,” “because the speaker has in his [or her] mind the picture of the object in use.”²⁰ Implied in the language is an epistemological understanding that to know is to do. Thus, the picture, the value, or the knowledge of a thing is only as good as the action with which it is related.

“Get your learning but keep your burning.”

Black learning is inextricably bound up in metaphor and simile. Black Pentecostalism is laden with catchphrases as spiritual praxis, which reflects and shapes ongoing black identity and spiritual formation. For example, Bishop J.O. Patterson, former prelate of the Church of God in Christ, cautions Pentecostal students in folk pedagogy: “Get your learning but keep your burning.” In essence the bishop evokes an

19. Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, 49.

20. Hurston, 50.

awareness that the image of Holy Ghost fire is not merely emotive but also acquainted with wisdom. He contrives a catchphrase to capture a theology of education that places wisdom of experiencing a God-encounter at the center. And, he holds up the image of a burning fire (with symbolizes the Holy Spirit) to make his case. The adage (Get your learning but keep your burning) passed on from the bishop continues to circulate in black Pentecostal circles today.

“Be in the world but not of the world.”

Another dynamic of catchphrases in black language is wordplay. A distinctive black Pentecostal adage that has become somewhat of a mantra involves a wordplay: “Be in the world but not of the world.” Theologically speaking, this catchphrase testifies to a relational identity that is spirit-filled and built on Christ. Black Pentecostals see themselves as citizens of a heavenly Kingdom by virtue of baptism of the Spirit. Black holiness Pentecostals believe that Spirit-led freedom cultivates an identity distinct to “Spirit-filled” people. It equips God’s people to bear witness as to what it means to be “in Christ.” Being “in Christ” is liberating and transforming. Andrews and Wimberly agree that liberation has been the goal of black faith formation. Wimberly explains:

Liberation has punctuated the story of African Americans beginning with the sojourn of our forebears in slavery. It became encapsulated in the prophetic statement: ‘God wants us free!’ which voiced the belief in God’s desire for our freedom from humiliation and subjugation to live move and have our being with human dignity in a just society.²¹

21. Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 5.

The sanctified church tradition sees liberation not as a distant goal, but as an essential part of the faith formation process.

“Let the Spirit have its way;” and “Let the Spirit have free course.”

Lastly, an action-oriented language is full of words and phrases that capture movement. Because black religious epistemology envisions a God that is fully involved in everyday life, the language for God is also action oriented. It follows that submitting to God’s presence in black Pentecostal worship is often called “letting the Spirit have its way” or letting the Spirit have free course.” It is where black language and indigenous practices of summoning the spirits come together.

Bishop Charles H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination, placed an emphasis on holiness through Spirit baptism as holistic freedom – freedom in worship as well as in socially prophetic liberation. While the Azusa Street Revival included radical black expressions as part of the worship, Bishop Mason is credited with placing a premium on freedom in worship that included the ring shout, dance, vibrant singing, clapping and falling out in the Spirit.²² He taught that radical worship was how to “let the spirit have its way” or “let the spirit have free course.” Mason’s contribution was considered revolutionary; his inclusion of black spirituality not only among black and white Pentecostals but also transformed worship in other black churches, as well. As a result, differences in the worship styles of Pentecostal and other black denominations have become less recognizable.

Spirituals

22. See Estrelida Y. Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, IVP, 2011), 51. Also, see Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, 91.

Music has contributed in large measure to black identity formation, as people of culture and as people of God. Often slave songs are called spirituals. However, Hurston explains that spirituals must not be understood as restricted to slavery.²³ She posits that “real spirituals are not really just songs. They are unceasing variations around a theme.”²⁴ They are musical ways in which black communities of all times embody wisdom – from the African Motherland to contemporary African American hip hop.

Spirituals epitomize the essence of black relational epistemology. Like catchphrases, they are made and forgotten every day. Catchphrases and spirituals contain both wisdom and emotions that emerge from daily work, play, and in relationship with other people. Unlike contemporary writers of spirituals, the authors of spirituals in slavery were more attuned to the message in the songs than who authored them. When some of the spirituals caught on in the community, they became part of the community – the words, the tunes, the wisdom. By doing so, the lyrics sometimes changed and additional verses were often added.

Lyrics in black religious music carries messages gleaned from linking personal narratives with biblical narratives, during slavery and beyond. Two examples are “Mary, Don’t You Weep:”

O Mary, don’t you weep,

Martha, don’t you mourn

O Mary, don’t you weep,

Martha, don’t you mourn

23. Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, 79.

24. Hurston, 79.

Pharaoh's army got drowned
In the Red Sea,
O Mary, don't you weep,
Tell Martha not to mourn
Some of these mornings bright and fair
Take my wings and cleave the air
Pharaoh's army got drowned
In the Red Sea,
O Mary, don't you weep
Martha, don't you mourn,
When I get to heaven
Goin' to sing and shout
Nobody there for to turn me out.

And, "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?:"

Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?
Then why not every man?
He delivered Daniel from the lion's den
Jonah from the belly of the whale
And the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace
Then why not every man?

DuBois, Hardy, and Raboteau agree that black spirituals, also called Negro spirituals, contain theological wealth. DuBois states,

Little of beauty has America given the world save the rude grandeur God himself stamped on her bosom; the human spirit in this new world has expressed itself in vigor and ingenuity rather than in beauty. And so by fateful chance the Negro folk-song – the rhythmic cry of the slave – stands to-day not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of *human experience* born this side the seas. It has been neglected, it has been, and is, half despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.²⁵

DuBois perceives a connection between black epistemology and black theology. His vision of life and his vision of God were shaped together. Epistemological and theological duality dignified black people with a spirituality that birthed hope in crisis. In DuBois' words,

Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes of hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins.²⁶

25. W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 155-156. Italics mine.

26. DuBois., 162.

DuBois' consults black music in his search for identity and belonging. He found answers to his "longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self."²⁷ Liberation theologian James H. Cone and others have also done important theological research into the meaning of black music.²⁸ Cone confirms that black spirituality does not bifurcate the secular and sacred as western spirituality tends to do. He adds that black music 'touch[es] the very substance and "gut" of black religion' as pertaining to the essence of black selfhood and faith identity in a white dominated society.²⁹ Browning's theological treatment of practical reason is helpful in examining fluidity in secular and sacred spirituality. He says,

The difference between so-called secular and religious forms of practical reason is not that the former is irreligious and the latter religious. The difference is between systems in which the religious framework is explicit and where it is implicit. Practical reason is always surrounded by images of the world that are grounded on faith assumptions. Narratives and metaphors carry these faith assumptions. Some are vague and almost imperceptible. Others are explicit and clearly articulated. Christianity has an explicit narrative tradition that constitutes the envelope for a core model of practical reason.³⁰

Cone contends that spirituals and blues represent the inseparability of the secular and sacred in black life. One does not represent good and the other bad. Both reflect the same

27. DuBois, 2-3.

28. The implications are meaningful in careful examination of black music today. I will reserve that conversation for another paper.

29. James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1972), 3.

30. Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 11-12.

black experience in the United States.³¹ There are times when God, scripture and biblical narratives may be discussed in light of life's challenges and victories. At other times, God-talk is central to conversion and personal piety. Such dynamics are found in religious and non-religious music. Cone explains,

Music has been and continues to be the most significant creative art expression of African-Americans. Blacks sing and play music (in their churches and at juke-joint parties) as a way of coping with life's contradictions and of celebrating its triumphs. We sing when we are happy and when we are sad; when we get a job and when we lose one; when we protest for our rights and when the formal achievement of them makes no difference in the quality of life.³²

The range of human emotions that black music expresses makes it impossible to extract an authentic analysis without participating in the experience-based spirituality that created it.³³ For this reason, black music requires affective interpretive dimensions. Cone further explains,

Black music ... unites the joy and the sorrow, the love and the hate, the hope and the despair of black people; and it moves the people toward the direction of total liberation. It shapes and defines black existence and creates cultural structures for black expression... it confronts the individual with the truth of black existence and affirms that black being is possible only in a communal context.³⁴

31. Cone, 129.

32. Cone, 129.

33. Cone, 3.

34. Cone, 5.

This means that ‘black music must be *lived* before it can be understood.’³⁵ Thus, music shares in the broad dynamics of black ‘lived worship’ and the musical exegetist must connect with the emotions of the music.

The lived experience of whites has been diametrically different from that of blacks. In Cone’s estimation, participants in dominant white American life are incapable of understanding black spirituality. Since the white religious outlook separated secular from sacred, whites used black music as entertainment. However, they were unable to accept radical expressions as part of sacred worship.

Black Pentecostalism advanced radical expression as a “norm,” an anticipated and celebrated element of the worship experience. However, it did not maintain the inseparability of sacred and secular, drawing a line between them. As a result, the black Pentecostal movement lost musicians who could not come to terms with the logic of separation, including Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Sam Cooke, Little Richard, and others. Drawing upon a Pentecostal foundation, they pursued careers in non-religious contexts. Other musicians, among them Andre’ Crouch, the Hawkins Family, the Clarke Sisters, the Winans, and BeBe & CeCee Winans, remained in the Church of God in Christ, but challenged the line of separation. Their music often spoke to reality in a way that traditional religious music did not. Sometimes blurring of the lines was met with resistance within the Pentecostal movement. However, these musicians persevered and, in many ways, have redeemed the historic black folk religious tradition. Today, young musicians who perform in non-religious contexts – K-Ci and Jo Jo, Toni Braxton, Mary

35. Cone, 3.

J. Blige, Fantasia Barrino and Alex Harris – draw upon Pentecostal backgrounds to evoke a spirituality that stirs audiences with hope.

Radical Worship Expressions

Radical animated expressions of ring shout, dance, jumping, rigorous handclapping, foot stomping, and spirit-fainting characterize the black spiritual experience. Daniel Payne’s autobiography indicates that slave Christians commonly understood radical worship expressions as intimately connected with both conversion and life as believers.³⁶ Undoubtedly, some slave pastors were influenced by the criticism of whites about black approaches to worship. Some black pastors condemned radical expressions as heathenistic; others considered them important in identity and faith forming. Vibrant worship brought joy amid inhumane living conditions. The Holy Spirit mounted ecstatic shouting and enthusiastic dancing, singing and drumming. An ex-slave preacher wrote,

The old meeting house caught on fire. The spirit was there. Every heart was beating in unison as we turned our minds to God to tell him of our sorrows here below. God saw our need and came to us.... There is a joy on the inside and it wells up so strong that we can’t keep still. It is fire in the bones. Any time the fire touches a man, he will jump.³⁷

They were convinced that radical worship expressions stirred the spirit upon which God visited a community in distress. When the Spirit was stirred up, God brought joy that stirred the soul. Lived worship has to do with such interplay of God’s presence in

36. Daniel Alexander Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Yours*, 1st Publication 1886 (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 254–256.

37. Johnson, *God Struck Me Dead*, 74.

response to everyday life, providing answers and resources to sustain God's people and ultimately cause their lives to flourish. The hopeful dimensions of lived worship were spiritual, mental, and physical fulfillment.

Not all black church traditions welcomed radical expressions of worship. Perhaps the influence of white religion had something to do with it. This is evident in late 18th Century AME Bishop Daniel Payne's and others' rejection of the ring shout, dance and other excitable expressions during religious gatherings. The criticism gained foothold in some black churches and continued for the next two hundred years or more.

Conversely, the Azusa Street Revival attributed radical black expressions to the work of the Holy Spirit. They affirmed the ring shout, dance, jumping, rigorous handclapping, foot stamping, and spirit-fainting as the Spirit's work in their midst. As Hurston comments that "holy dancing" in the sanctified church is an example of how in the tradition, "The congregation is restored to its primitive altars under the new name of Christ."³⁸ She also comments on the worship expression of "shouting:" "It is nothing more than a continuation of the African 'possession' by the gods. The gods possess the body of the worshipper and he or she is supposed to know nothing of the actions until the god decamps. This is still prevalent in most Negro protestant churches and is universal in the sanctified churches."³⁹ Hurston explains,

The Sanctified Church... [put] back into Negro religion those elements which were brought over from Africa and grafted onto Christianity as soon as the Negro came in contact with it which are being rooted out as the American Negro

38. Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, 104.

39. Hurston, 104.

approaches white concepts. The people who make up the sanctified groups, while admiring the white brother in many ways think him ridiculous in church. They feel that the white man is too cut and dried and business-like to be of much use in a service.⁴⁰

Stated differently, the sanctified church tradition resisted trends to “clean up” radical expressions for a more “dignified” worship experience that would align them with the ways white Christians worship. Pentecostals believed that “cleaning up” communal worship inadvertently distances Christians from the rich gift of Spirit baptism. For Pentecostals, clapping hands, stomping feet, dancing and shouting “Glory!” “Hallelujah!” “Praise the Lord!” stirred the spirit much as in slave religious meetings. Nevertheless, the black churches that disallowed radical expressions of worship wanted to protect themselves from, to assimilate to, or to be accepted by white religious authorities. After all, the early evolution of institutionalized black churches occurred at a time when the dominant white society viewed large black gatherings as a threat to power. At varying times during the 18th and 19th centuries several states in the Deep South outlawed large gatherings of black people, including at churches.

It follows that black Pentecostalism drew upon the best of African spirituality to evoke protest against white oppression and social injustice. Hurston explains,

The Sanctified Church is a protest against the high-brow tendency in Negro Protestant congregations as the Negroes gain more education and wealth. It is understandable that they take on the religious attitudes of the white man which are

40. Hurston, 105-106.

as a rule so staid and restrained that it seems unbearably dull to the more primitive Negro who associates the rhythm of sound and motion with religion.⁴¹

The protest against white oppression was deeper than materialism and social categories. Black Pentecostalism was a protest against European ideological and spiritual colonization. Deeper, lingering colonial problems are at the heart of black social oppression. Through black folk religious lens, the sanctified church tradition, moreover, understands the problem as spiritual warfare. The preacher, among other pastoral roles in the community of faith, becomes the leader of spiritual warfare.

A sermon from Bishop Charles H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, is an example of how black Pentecostal preachers led in spiritual and theological protest. A portion of Bishop Mason's sermon, "Storms–Storms–Storms," references Psalm 66:15: "Come and see the works of God; He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men." Bishop Mason employs what Wimberly calls "story-linking" in the following: "In a little town, DeSoto, where there was so much race hatred, I am told that a sign bearing these words was raised, 'Negroes, read and run.' God performed another one of His strange acts. This town was completely destroyed."⁴²

African religion has everything to do with life. Thus, the relational nature of African American spirituality and ways of knowing is best expressed in black worship. From congregational singing to call and response during the sermon, the congregation is formed into the people of God. A sermon like Mason's demonstrates two key elements in black preaching. The first is that the call and response in preaching is part of black

41. Hurston, 103.

42. Charles H. Mason, "Storms–Storms–Storms," in *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation*, ed. Douglas Jacobsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 216.

spiritual formation. A sermon like this invariably excited the audience who responded with spontaneous congregational responses such as “Amen!” “Preach!” “Tell it, Reverend!” Secondly, black Pentecostal spirituality is not about mere personal piety but also community formation and spiritual warfare against social injustice. For Mason, relating scripture to everyday life was what it means to be a Christian, and worship-based ways of forming believers “in Christ” is both liberating and transforming. It is liberating in that, through the sermon, God’s people are delivered; it is transforming in that God’s people become more Christ-like through the Holy Spirit.

Estrelida Y. Alexander explains that Bishop Mason like other Pentecostal preachers of the 20th Century unashamedly promoted radical black worship expressions “exhibited a strong sense of black identity, often incorporating, at least implicitly, themes of liberation and social justice into his messages.”⁴³ Alexander’s insight into the bridge between black identity, black social concerns and black sanctified preaching sheds light on the ethical and theological dimensions at play in the movement. To this end, Cheryl J. Sanders presses the definition of the “sanctified church” beyond Cheryl Townsend Gilkes’ descriptive definition (cited in a footnote of the first mention of the “sanctified church” in this dissertation). Sanders defines the movement in deeper ethical terms: “The Sanctified church is an African American Christian reform movement that seeks to bring its standards of worship, personal morality, and social concern into conformity with biblical hermeneutic of holiness and spiritual empowerment.”⁴⁴ The themes of liberation and justice, as referenced in Alexander’s observation of black Pentecostal preaching,

43. Johnson, *God Struck Me Dead*, 90.

44. Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.

accentuate a theological meaning enshrined in the coupling of black identity, black culture, and experience. God is a God of liberation and justice. God's people are best prepared to live with faithfulness to God as they experience God's liberating power that enables them to live more fully as human beings.

Research Conclusions

Andrews employed theological praxis to examine the reservoir of black folk religion. His objective was to encourage black churches to re-examine pastoral and prophetic involvement in light of current reality. This chapter built upon Andrews' agenda for practical theology. It considered black holiness Pentecostal tradition within the broader black church tradition.

This research hints at theological propositions for further faith formation among Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches. Narratives, colloquialisms, music, and adulate expressions continue to characterize contemporary black life. This study can provide epistemological and sociological insights into how black identity and faith formation continue to evolve.

CHAPTER THREE. A BLACK PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC¹

Introduction: Epistemology in Black Pentecostalism

Black Pentecostal hermeneutics have historically existed in the shadows of theological discourse. Work is currently underway among the movement's pool of intellectuals to develop the black Pentecostal academic tradition(s). This chapter investigates the historical gap that has existed over the past century between black and white Pentecostal theologies. While there are similarities, a separation of theological sources evolved early in the movement that drew lines of demarcation between black and white Pentecostalism. Results of this research show that blackness is a significant theological source in shaping black Pentecostalism. The research affirms the legitimacy of black Pentecostal traditions for integrating spirituality and social engagement.

Saturday morning, April 28, 2018, at the Shula's Hotel in Miami Lakes, Florida, the author looked at the clock; it was 2:30am. For the past five hours he had been ruminating over key insights in James H. Cone's work. Convinced that there remains a need for further conversation about the synergy between Cone's sources for black theology and black Pentecostal hermeneutics, the author laid aside his books and went to bed but did not sleep long. The alarm clock went off at 7am for his routine Saturday morning prayer. At 7:45am, the author returned to his computer first to see what he might have missed on Facebook. Shocked to see the news that overnight, while he was reading Cone's work, Cone was transitioning from his work on earth to eternity.

1. A version of this chapter appeared as "Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics? in James H. Cone's Theological Sources and Black Pentecostalism," in *Pneuma* 41, 2: 193–217 (Brill, 2019).

Stunned and saddened, the author reflected on the only time he had the privilege of meeting Cone. They were at the Annual American Academy of Religion (AAR) Meeting in Chicago in November 2008. Cone attended a panel discussion about Pentecostalism. He sat quietly in the back until there was opportunity for questions. Raising his hand politely, he waited his turn. When the moderator acknowledged Cone, his high-pitched, bodacious voice commanded the room: “I have one question: what are Pentecostals going to do about white supremacy?” Alexander’s inadequate response prompted Cone to interrupt her attempt to answer. He repeated, “I said, what are Pentecostals going to do about white supremacy?” Cone added, “I have been asking this question for years, and I can’t get an answer; ‘what are Pentecostals doing about white supremacy?’”

Cone may have been misled by a limited awareness of Pentecostal “distinctives,” such as baptism in the Spirit, holiness codes, and lengthy, vibrant worship services. For one reason or another, Cone assumed that black Pentecostals have a history of being absent from socially prophetic responses to suffering under racial segregation. However, this chapter maintains that there is more synergy between liberation theology and Pentecostal theology than has often been emphasized.

Cone’s question invites black Pentecostal scholars to take seriously *the ways in which* and *to what extent* blackness meets the accepted standard as a theological source.² Stated differently, black Pentecostals must come to terms with the liberating notion of

2. In his 2013 dissertation, Renea C.A. Brathwaite (in part) makes the case that William Seymour employed theological sources related to epistemology. Brathwaite argues that one must not overlook Seymour’s “blackness” a key source in his theology. See Renea C. A. Brathwaite, “Seymour, The ‘New’ Theologian: An Investigation into The Theology of an Early Pentecostal Pioneer” (PhD diss., Regent University, 2013).

blackness as an epistemological distinction³ with accompanying hermeneutics at play. Blackness as theological source has been present in black Pentecostal practice but not always articulated as such.

Epistemology is embedded in the Azusa Street Revival, thus inherent to the genesis of American Pentecostalism. However, it may be argued that the hegemony of Western epistemology has overshadowed black epistemology. Various scholars have interpreted the Pentecostal movement's connectedness to its Wesleyan roots in conciliation with the evangelical academy. Pentecostal scholarship has not examined the depth of black epistemology and hermeneutics at the birth of the movement. Black Pentecostal scholarship is establishing independence from evangelical adherents and gaining support in dismantling the boundaries of Western epistemology.

The Challenge of a Single Hermeneutic

It is important to note that there are both vague similarities and stark differences between white and black Pentecostal hermeneutics as reflected in the so-called Cleveland School.⁴ The Cleveland School is a group of scholars whose Pentecostal theological method involves experience, context, and praxis. Three theologians in the Cleveland

3. See Boaventura De Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 92. Sociologist Boaventura De Sousa Santos calls out the exclusion of culturally diverse ways of knowing as “epistemicide.” He explains, “The loss of epistemological confidence that concurrently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity.” In other words, Western hegemony has been poisonous, not because of its legitimacy in knowledge formation but rather, because it has overshadowed and even discredited other cultural hermeneutic approaches rooted in epistemologies that are incongruent with Western ones. Such “epistemicide” has to long lingered in the theological academy in which Western frameworks have governed theological discourse.

4. Kenneth J. Archer, ‘The Making of an Academic Pentecostal Tradition: The Cleveland School’. A paper presented at the Society for Pentecostal Studies (March 2016). Archer explains key features of a school of thought (i.e., hermeneutics, epistemology, and spirituality) at Pentecostal Theological School and the Centre for Pentecostal Theology in Cleveland, TN.

School whose work advances a parallel method between white and black Pentecostals are Cheryl Bridges Johns,⁵ Kenneth Archer,⁶ and Wolfgang Vondey.⁷

Johns aptly points out that Pentecostal theology is neither a “banking approach” (*a la* Paulo Freire) nor merely a praxis orientation according to Freire’s human-centered definition.⁸ “[Freire] leaves most of the responsibility for praxis up to humanity. At best, God is a subjective presence in the historical process.”⁹ The human condition and God, as object of worship, are crucial dynamics for true transformation in Pentecostal formation. Johns calls the human-God dynamic an “epistemology of *yada*” – the acknowledgement of the human agency in response to God’s grace at work among Pentecostals.¹⁰

Kenneth J. Archer advances the argument with five elements in Pentecostal theology. The first is that early Pentecostals “existed on the margins of modernity which affected their reading of Scripture.”¹¹ Secondly, “early Pentecostals... used the more dynamic ‘Bible Reading Method’.... Interpretations generated by the ‘Bible Reading Method’ were acceptable only if one had embraced the Pentecostal story, which held the method together.”¹² Thirdly, is the perspective of “the Central Narrative Conviction.”¹³ He notes that the narrative conviction “attempts to convey the community as an

5. See Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998).

6. See Kenneth J. Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics for the twenty-first Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (New York: T&T Clarke International, 2004).

7. See Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, July 2017). In part, Vondey interprets Pentecostal theology through the Pentecost event (Acts 2), emphasizing that the Pentecostal narrative is Pentecostalism’s primary theological symbol.

8. Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, 38.

9. Johns. Also, see Paulo Freire, “Letter to a Theology Student,” *Catholic Mind* 70 (September 1972): 6-8.

10. Johns, 39-40.

11. Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics for the Twenty-first Century*, 195.

12. Archer, 195

13. Archer, 195

embodiment of its convictions.... The narrative convictions of the community ...provide the context in which both the hermeneutical process and results make sense.”¹⁴ Fourthly, Archer shows that the convictions mentioned in the third element “have to do with the importance of Pentecostal identity and how it impacts the hermeneutical process.”¹⁵ Archer recognizes the essentiality of narrative, experience with God and the “Bible Reading Method” of scriptural interpretation as crucial to the Pentecostal theological process and spiritual practice. Yet, the role of human suffering does not rise as co-equal source in Archer’s treatment of “embodiment” in Pentecostal theology. Thus, his treatment falls short of attending to a potential role that black experience, black history, and black culture played in early Pentecostal spirituality and formation.

Consistent with Johns’ “epistemology of *yada*” and Archer’s discourse on Pentecostal theology, Vondey explains that Pentecost in Acts 2 is “the core theological symbol of Pentecostal theology, and its theological narrative is the full gospel.”¹⁶ Throughout *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*, Vondey weaves the narrative of Pentecostalism, his notion of the “full” Christ-centered Gospel, the Pentecost story in Acts 2, and the altar of worship and repentance in the shaping of his liturgically-oriented Pentecostal theology and spirituality.¹⁷ It seems that the weight of Vondey’s argument places scripture and religious experience over other forms of human experience in Pentecostal theology. He is sensitive to human agency as necessary theological element but with particular interest in religious experience. Personal and communal suffering,

14. Archer, 195.

15. Archer, 196.

16. Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 1.

17. Vondey, see 21-45 for the overview of method.

pain, and systemic oppression do not rise to the necessary level of theological source in Vondey's treatment of Pentecostal theology.

Moreover, there has remained a need for this work of crystalizing theological distinctions in black Pentecostalism; its adherents have always taken into consideration the whole course of both human and religious experience. God shows up amid black Pentecostal lived worship as One who cares about spiritual and everyday life. The integration of spirituality in everyday life constitutes black Pentecostal lived worship. This means that black Pentecostals retain the black experience as essential theological source.¹⁸ For them, the freedom of the Spirit is a freedom applied to the soul and the hope of socio-political liberation, as well. This integrated notion of spiritual and social liberation was not something that white Pentecostals fully understood.

Since the 1970s Pentecostal liberationist Leonard Lovett has called for a socio-political examination of black Pentecostalism because he discerned blackness as theological source when it was a scandalous idea.¹⁹ Lovett was also among the first to recognize Cone's work as valuable in black Pentecostal theology. While Pentecostals have discovered the Wesleyan source theories that inform the doing of Pentecostal theology, a study of the practice of black Pentecostalism reveals that the black experience, black history, black culture, revelation, and scripture were part of faith formation. Black people's heritage, culture and experience contribute to the

18. See Renea C. A. Brathwaite, "Seymour, The 'New' Theologian: An Investigation into the Theology of an Early Pentecostal Pioneer" (Ph.D. diss., Regent University, 2013), particularly chapters 2 and 3.

19. See Leonard Lovett, "Perspectives on Black Origins of the Contemporary Pentecostal Movement," in *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 1 (1973): 36-49; Leonard Lovett, "Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement," in *Aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Origins*, edited by Vinson Synan. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975; and Leonard Lovett, "Liberation: A Dual-Edged Sword," *Pneuma* 9, no. 2 (1987): 155-71.

epistemological framework. In other words, blackness has ideological and philosophical depth related to the way black people experience the world. More black Pentecostal ethnographical excavation is needed to unearth the gravitas of blackness as a black Pentecostal theological source.

Outside of Pentecostal scholarship, contemporary practical theologians and Christian social ethicists have advanced some research on the role of lived reality in religious formation and theological insights.²⁰ However, little consideration of Pentecostalism appears in the literature; nowhere is experiential theology exemplified greater than with black Pentecostals. They have embodied a way of doing theology and spirituality that interweaves God-relatedness *within* and *in response to* human experience. Dating back to the 1900s, black Pentecostals have emphasized faith amid everyday social oppression under Jim Crow. Not only did they see God as the “bridge over (socially) troubled waters;” but also, they discovered the God who was always on their side. This remains the case today.

The nature of Pentecostal life and theology continues to be defined in light of the black struggle.²¹ Black Pentecostal-type churches (Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic churches) continue to minister within a large number of socially underprivileged communities. Theology has been both praxis-oriented and *yada*-oriented

20. For a collection of practical theologians and social ethicists argue for the role spiritual and moral formation in lived worship, see Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

21. Jim Crow never officially ended. Thus, black life continues its bout with elements of Jim Crow, though they have experienced significant social progress.

because they have intermingled black culture, the black experience, revelation, tradition, and a high regard for scripture and the Holy Spirit as divine transformative agency.²²

Doing black Pentecostal theology includes but moves beyond a liturgical approach to Pentecostalism as expressed in Vondey's work. It takes seriously the work of the Spirit to heal hearts and hurts amid the evils of social oppression. While black Pentecostals may not have done enough to appease Cone's question about their response to white supremacy, the social condition has always been present in Pentecostal theological praxis.²³

From the outside looking in, one would note that black Pentecostals have had a long-standing struggle with the broader Black church because of its characteristic Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, and holiness codes.²⁴ However, as with liberation theology, struggles that dominate everyday life are central to black Pentecostal theology and not merely incidental to it. While there are elements of consistency between black Pentecostalism and white Pentecostalism, the distinctive life situations in the black Pentecostal context create nuances in theology and scholarship.

22. Johns' work is helpful in noting that Pentecostals believe in a God who transforms and not simply a God who understands and helps. See Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, 39. However, later, I will explain the multiple sources of black theology in black Pentecostal theology, associating black Pentecostal theology more closely with black theology than has been credited within Pentecostal circles.

23. This is evident in the ministries and writings of Ida B. Robinson, Robert C. Lawson, Arthur Brazier and others. For examples of black Pentecostal theological praxis and white supremacy, see the following works by Robinson, Lawson, and Brazier: See Robinson, Ida. "The Economic Persecution." *The Latter Day Messenger*, (May 23, 1935): 2; Robert C. Lawson, *The Anthropology of Jesus Christ Our Kinsman* (New York: Church of Christ, 1969); Robert C. Spellman and Mabel L. Thomas, *The Life, Legend and Legacy of Bishop R. C. Lawson* (Scotch Plains: Privately Printed, 1983); Robert C. Lawson, "The Greatest Evil in This World Is Race Prejudice," in *For the Defense of the Gospel: The Writings of Bishop R.C. Lawson* (New York: Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, 1972), 253; Robert C. Lawson, "Sparks from The Anvil," *For the Defense of the Gospel*, 326-27; Arthur M. Brazier, *Black Self-Determination: The Story of the Woodlawn Organization* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1969).

24. i.e. strict dress codes, alcohol prohibition, some of their social practices as pertaining to going to night clubs, movies and watching TV, etc.

A Case for Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics

Over the last few decades an increased number of black Pentecostal scholars have offered voice to black Pentecostal theology. These scholars affirm and critique theological ideals in the confines of predominantly white academic frameworks and within the limits of white theological sources. Black Pentecostal hermeneutics is one of the least examined theological subjects but must become an important subject in black Pentecostal scholarship. Scholars Daniels and Loynes have written on black Pentecostal hermeneutics.²⁵ Black Pentecostal practice contains a wealth of hermeneutical foundations for reimagining innovative ways for doing theology.

American Pentecostalism emerged culturally saturated with concern about the situations its adherents endured. A number of whites were attracted to the movement, a trend that came with glimmers of hope and divine promise for the eradication of racism. In an article entitled “Vintage Photo, Visual Exegesis, and 1917 Interracial Pentecostalism,” Daniels interprets early Pentecostalism (particularly the Church of God in Christ) as “an authentic form of Pentecostal and Christian life”²⁶ amid a racially divided society. Daniels also carefully acknowledges that the movement that started with a racially harmonious expectation was divided by white denominations that used race as a defining marker. Black Pentecostal theological impulse clashed with white Pentecostal theological impulse. In Daniels’ words, “[Black] Pentecostals blazed new trajectories

25 See David D. Daniels III, “Vintage Photo, Visual Exegesis, and 1917 Interracial Pentecostalism: Hermeneutical Devices and Historical Maneuvers,” in *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*, edited by Kenneth J. Archer and L. William Oliverio, Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 212-228; and Duane T. Loynes, Sr., “Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Race in the Early Twentieth Century: Towards a Pentecostal Hermeneutics of Culture,” in *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*, edited by Kenneth J. Archer and L. William Oliverio, Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 229-248.

26. Daniels, “Vintage Photo, Visual Exegesis, and 1917 Interracial Pentecostalism,” 224.

[T]hese new trajectories marked an historical arc where Pentecostals in predominantly white denominations made race a defining marker of their organizational life.”²⁷ White denominational resistance to the early glimmers of hope signifies divergence between black and white Pentecostals. Pentecostals with similar religious experience and claims to be people of the Spirit and people of the “Book” (Bible believers) have persisted for a hundred years. Moreover, black Pentecostal approaches to theology are inextricably connected to black relational and embodied ways of knowing. Moreover, black Pentecostal embodiment is more accurately “embodied spirituality” of Christian sources than the “embodied interpretation” of Christian sources that Archer explains. Embodied spirituality is a praxis orientation of everyday life, conducted by the power of the Holy Spirit and in reflection upon scripture for the purpose of giving meaning of life.

Central to spiritual embodiment is experience. Theologian Christian Scharen and ethicist Aana Marie Vigen shed light on the depth of “embodiment.” They explain:

Appreciating the complexity and rigor of experience helps us see the ways human beings are both shaped by all of these sources and then in turn shape them and reinterpret them. Such awareness can lead to the vitality of faith traditions and communities, rather than working to dismantle them.... Experience functions as a ‘type of truth claim’— in itself, it contains moral knowledge.²⁸

Pentecostals believe that through the baptism of the Spirit and life in the Spirit, scripture comes alive and God’s truth is revealed. The hermeneutical distinction is embodied epistemological— characteristic of black embodied and relational ways of knowing. Black

27. Daniels, 224.

28. Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 63.

hermeneutical frameworks interspersed in early 20th century Pentecostal spirituality nurtured the movement.

The Pentecostal movement started off with the promise of being a balm for racism in America. Bartleman reported early Pentecostalism as a version of Christianity that had washed away the color line in the blood of Jesus.²⁹ Whites and blacks were worshipping together and lining up behind the movement's black leader.³⁰ Newspapers and journals reported the "miracle at Azusa Street." Occurring during the heart of the Jim Crow era, this was indeed miraculous. Through the lens of religious status quo, some white and black ministers disdained the movement. The miracle was short-lived as whites broke-away from the black-led Pentecostal gatherings and black Pentecostal denominations. They took with them the vibrant worship, the emphasis on Spirit-baptism, and other lessons learned from black Pentecostal leaders such as William Seymour and Charles H. Mason.³¹ Loynes notes, "Despite its promising state and the creative implementations of racially inclusive measures by some leaders, Pentecostalism as a whole would soon mirror the larger culture in its advocacy of segregation, its discrimination against blacks (as fellow members and as leaders), and its theological justification of white superiority."³² Racial divergence between black and white Pentecostalism carried with it the maturation of significant hermeneutical barriers. On the one hand, black folk religious

29. Frank Bartleman *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles* (1925): Republished as *Azusa Street* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1980), 54.

30. Bartleman, 54.

31. Bishop Charles H. Mason received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the Azusa Street Revival and later founded the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination.

32. Duane T. Loynes, Sr., "Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Race in the Early Twentieth Century: Towards a Pentecostal Hermeneutics of Culture. In *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*. Edited by Kenneth J. Archer and L. William Oliverio, Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 230.

impulses continued to emerge within black Pentecostalism against the backdrop of pervasive white supremacy. On the other hand, white Pentecostals sought to carve out religious and intellectual formation within Western Evangelical theological discourse.

Cone's Sources

With the exception of a few poorly supported efforts, there is apparently no significant emphasis on developing a black Pentecostal college or university. Estrelida Y. Alexander is to be commended for her single-handed efforts in recent years to build the William Seymour College in Lanham, Maryland. She has struggled to attract support from the black Pentecostal world. With such minimal investment in theological intellectualism, black Pentecostals have depended far too long on white evangelicals and Pentecostals to speak for them.

To advance a hermeneutical framework, black Pentecostals must take liberation theology seriously. A critical engagement with black liberation theology reveals source corroboration with black Pentecostal theology. For instance, Cone's theology can inform the construction of a black Pentecostal hermeneutic. In his classic book, *Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone identifies six credible sources that could comprise and validate a hermeneutical framework: black experience, black history, black culture, revelation, scripture, and tradition.

Black Experience

Cone asserts that the "black experience" is more than a collection of narratives about how black people have struggled in North America. It is a theological experience rooted in black American identity and faith formation. Experience is both personal and communal. Scharen and Vigen offer insight into the theological resourcefulness of

experience. They explain, “The category [of embodied practices or communal experiences] triangulates experience *with* experience— integrating ethnographic, sociological economic, cultural, theological, biblical, and other sources of knowledge along the way.”³³ The question of experience explores not simply *what* black people do that is formational but rather *how they live faithfully* as a matter of experience.³⁴

Accordingly, the black experience is inextricably the journey of a people, God, and faith, which was an inescapable theological source in black theology. The black American experience is one of the most gruesome experiences of human suffering in the world. Faith, a steadfast trust in God, was critical for survival amid such suffering.

For black Pentecostals, all of life is theological. In his book, *Reclaiming the Spirit in Black Faith*, Hicks adds that from a sociocultural perspective, “religious activity in black Christianity provided a cultural tool to ameliorate [black] existence in the world.”³⁵ Hicks’ assessment of black theology suggests that it must not shortchange the role of black religious activity as part of black experience. It is not enough to say that “God becomes a God of victims. In this way, God’s divine capacity is limited to the singular work of freeing people from bondage. Simultaneously, blacks became people who—even in the presence of God—are conceptually frozen and literally silenced within a void that reframes them as incomplete or only partially human.”³⁶

Black spirituality and faith formation are intermingled in the black experience. However, faith formation in the black experience is not limited to *what black people do*

33. Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 62.

34. Scharen and Vigen, 62.

35. Derek S. Hicks, *Reclaiming Spirit in the Black Faith Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 8.

36. Hicks, 8.

to cope; rather, the theological concern is a study of *how black people have lived faithfully*. To ignore the multiple dynamics of experience as source of black theology is to deny that God cares about the impact of human suffering. The question of *how* speaks to the essence of black spirituality. During the days of Jim Crow segregation, the songbird of the Deep South –Mahalia Jackson made popular the song, “How I Got Over”:

How I got over

How I got over

You know my soul looks back and wonders

How I got over.

Black Pentecostals have sung this song over many years because it embodies deep spirituality that resonates with the Pentecostal experience. In other words, spirituality is part of the journey of black Pentecostal faith formation. Accordingly, black Pentecostalism offers a two-pronged understanding of experience: a continuation of black theology’s credence and the Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit. Hicks provides a necessary philosophical link between black theology and black Pentecostalism by reframing the conversation about black suffering to highlight God as not only a God of the socially tormented people but even more so a God of social healing. Hicks’s sociocultural reason follows:

In that wounds *do* heal, blacks creatively and perpetually manufacture safe spaces wherein they are made whole. What results in this reframing is a conception of a God of the wounded and potentially healed. Instead of an emphasis on a definitive

and results-based actualization of liberation, blacks are in part made whole through experiencing their agency en route to their healing.³⁷

Physical abuse of black bodies is fundamental to a deeper conviction about God, the healer. Hicks calls this ‘recalibrational spirituality.’³⁸

In other words, religion for blacks is not merely an “opium of the people.” It is rather a tactical mechanism used as an aggressive response to oppression.³⁹ In this way, black Pentecostals exemplify a two-dimensional embrace: one as source for theology (a hermeneutic) and the other as reservoir of theological knowledge (epistemology).

Perhaps, black Pentecostalism is an example of Scharen and Vigen’s argument for giving theological weight to life’s experiences – “not only the oppression but also the joys of life, we show respect *both* for the traditions and scriptures we inherit *and* for the lives and events we create out of them and the new insights we encounter.”⁴⁰

Black Pentecostals regard the experience of the Holy Spirit as theological source. Pentecostals, in general, believe in the full range of the gifts of the Spirit. Speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues are important gifts but not the only gifts. Healing and miracles are also essential gifts in the movement. Black Pentecostals embody the healing presence of the Spirit in that social healing is possible through Pentecostal spirituality as physical healing. Black Pentecostalism includes lived experience as essential in Christian spirituality and biblical interpretation.

37. Hicks, 8.

38. Hicks, 8.

39. Hicks, 9.

40. Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 63. Niebuhr points out that experience is essential to divine revelation, in his chapter on “The Story of Our Life,” he acknowledges the role that human depravity, lived experience and culture plays in divine disclosure. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: MacMillan, 1941), 103.

Black History

Cone insists that in America, black history is crucial to black theology. Because history is a continuum that extends from past to present, Black history connects contemporary black lived experience to the full story of transport from Africa to North America. The plight of the black community is not a byproduct of systemic failure or poor black choices in America. Black suffering is the result of powerful white supremacy system imposed upon black people who were forced against their own will to immigrate the Americas.⁴¹ However, black history involves more than a history of what whites did to blacks. Cone explains that black history also encompasses divine empowerment among blacks to say “no” to every act of white cruelty.⁴² In Cone’s words, “Black theology focuses on black history as a source for its theological interpretation of God’s work in the world because divine activity is inseparable from black history.”⁴³ Negro spirituals, slave narratives, black sermons and poetry all point to a community of suffering people who believed that “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (ref. Romans 8:31)? Relentless tenacity bears witness that black history is a valid source for black theology.

The social courage of black Pentecostals has influenced Pentecostalism broadly. Johns acknowledges this influence in the Cleveland School’s theological method: context, experience and praxis. She observes, “Black Pentecostals have not been satisfied with attempts to solve the social problems with individual piety. They insist, along with

41. James H. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), 27.

42. Cone, 27.

43. Cone, 28.

Cone that ‘liberation is not only a relationship with God, but an encounter grounded in the historical struggle to be free.’”⁴⁴

Furthermore, black Pentecostals have contributed to black liberation in various ways. Some boldly participated in the fight for freedom, while others took more of a supporting role, offering resources and prayers for those on the frontlines. In one example, the Church of God in Christ made available its pulpit to Martin Luther King, Jr. when King went to Memphis to lead a march for sanitation workers. King’s last sermon was from that pulpit, Mason Temple Church of God in Christ. COGIC bishops were intimately involved in the trauma that blacks endured under the racist Jim Crow system. COGIC Bishop Louis Henry Ford officiated the funeral of Emmitt Till, a black youth beaten to death by whites, at Roberts Temple in Chicago, Illinois.⁴⁵

However, with less political dominance in the fight for freedom, black Pentecostals resisted any temptation to give up theological embodiment in religious expression. In *Pragmatic Spirituality*, Wilmore sheds light on a way in which black Pentecostals employed black spirituality reminiscent of slave religion in the fight for freedom in Jim Crow. Wilmore explains,

44. Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, 68. Johns affirms a liberationist methodology. Lenard Lovett championed a similar theological method in this early work on black Pentecostal theology in the 1970s. See Leonard Lovett, “Perspectives on Black Origins of the Contemporary Pentecostal Movement,” in *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 1 (1973): 36-49; Leonard Lovett, “Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement,” in *Aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Origins*, edited by Vinson Synan. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975 and Leonard Lovett, “Liberation: A Dual-Edged Sword,” *Pneuma* 9, no.2 (1987): 155–71.

45. Admittedly, black Pentecostalism is not as old as African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, The Christian Methodist Church, and black Baptist Churches. It would, therefore, be an exaggeration to suggest that black Pentecostal participation in the black struggle is equal to other expressions of the Black Church.

The emotional quality and so-called other-worldliness of slave religion was, at least partly, a way of squeezing into the dynamic present an expectation and excitement that could not be projected into a remote future, given the traditional concept of time among many African peoples.... [Similarly], the black Pentecostal experience was more of a dissociation experience, more of an alteration of identity and perception than its white counterpart. It was, in other words, an African more than a Euro-American experience.... My point is that one of the typical responses to eschatological preaching on the part of the slaves and their near descendants was the abandonment, at least temporarily, of the futurist idea about the advent of the Messiah and the adoption of an ‘immediatist’ orientation. Christ came to the black Christian community in the ecstasy of communal worship, and many of the spirituals echo this idea.⁴⁶

Adding to Wilmore’s insights, Cone’s article, “Sanctification, Liberation, and Black Worship,” concludes that “black worship is essentially a spiritual experience of the truth of black life. The experience is spiritual because the people encounter the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst.”⁴⁷ Notably, the role of black worship in black Pentecostalism was not only a matter of communal religious exercise; it was importantly, part of the black religious contribution to the freedom struggle. Theologian Frederick L. Ware adds,

Indeed African American worship involves hand-clapping, foot-stomping, shouting, dancing rousing sermons, soul-stirring music, passionate testimony,

46. Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith Through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 175.

47. James H. Cone, “Sanctification, Liberation, and Black Worship.” In *Theology Today: Sage Journals*. Volume: 35 issue: 2: 139-152; Issue published: July 1, 1978, 139.

fervent prayer, call and response, tongues-speaking, prophecy, miracles, conversion, shaking, and even falling out under the power of the Holy Spirit....

This kind of worship engages persons on the levels of emotions but should not be taken to mean mere emotionalism. African American spirituality can be as intense intellectually as it is emotional.⁴⁸

Black Pentecostalism has insisted upon preserving black religious expressions of free worship. In the early days of Pentecostalism, many whites have viewed black worship expressions as heathenistic at worse and entertaining at best. Some of the oldest black denominations suppressed black religious expressions for greater acceptance among white Christians. However, black Pentecostals understood the God-human encounter in black worship and preserved historical elements of black spirituality in ways that other black church denominations did not. Cone never fully admits that the God-human encounter in black religious experience is redeemed in black Pentecostalism, elevating black Pentecostal worship as viable theological source in black history.

Black Culture

Cone offers black culture as source in black theology, a context in which black culture has had a complex exchange with the broader society. On the one hand, black culture has infiltrated society through food, entertainment, industries, sports, medicine, technology and more. On the other hand, black culture has existed as inferior to white hegemony. Sociologist Boaventura De Sousa Santos points out, “Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated

48. Frederick L. Ware, *African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 128.

culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it.”⁴⁹ Importantly, while Santos’ observation has validity, it fails to acknowledge the role of the Black Church in keeping black culture alive amid the unequal cultural exchange in North America. Black Christians have always understood the sacred worth of black culture.

Cone asserts that “black culture consists of creative forms of expression as one reflects on history, endures pain, and experiences joy. It is the black community expressing itself in music, poetry, prose, and other art forms.”⁵⁰ Cone further explains that “culture refers to the way persons live and move in the world. It molds their thought forms.”⁵¹ Culture as theological resource has helped shape religious perspective and Christian life. Black theology, moreover, takes seriously the black community’s cultural expressions so it may speak relevantly to the black condition.⁵²

The black Pentecostal embodiment of faith embraces the connection between God and culture. This distinction is not only cultural but a theological source.

Black Pentecostal theology holds culture in dialogue with other Christian sources. As a result, the black Pentecostal tradition embraces culture and scripture as vital theological attributes. In the midst of popular culture, for example, Pentecostals maintained strict rules about dress, language, alcohol, sexuality, and music. The Pentecostal contribution to black liberation has influenced the growth of the movement. It has helped carve out black people’s space in the world, affirmed blackness, and facilitated a relationship with God in a way that makes sense. Santos explains,

49. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 91.

50. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 28.

51. Cone, 29.

52. Cone, 29.

To experience the world as one's own is to experience the world as a set of problems in whose solution one can meaningfully participate. The Western-centric abyssal line has historically excluded large segments of populations and ideas from experiencing the world as their own and thus from actively participating in its transformation. They could not possibly be problem solvers since they themselves were the problem.⁵³

Experiencing one's own world by the power of the Holy Spirit has been the hallmark of black Pentecostalism. The Spirit empowers an individual to express herself or himself in the fullness of cultural identity, such as ways of knowing, worship expressions, and communication methods. Moreover, the Spirit uses culture in faith formation, empowering people to participate in God's solutions to the world's problems. If black culture were not an essential ingredient in black Pentecostal theology, the movement may have long ago lost its attraction.

Revelation

Cone explains that "God's revelatory event takes place in the person of Jesus."⁵⁴ Yet, encountering the incarnated Christ occurs within human experience. For Cone, "the resurrection of Jesus means that he is present today in the midst of all societies effecting his liberation of the oppressed."⁵⁵ Cone comes close to Pentecostal logic when he adds, "[Jesus] is not confined to the first century, and thus our talk of him in the past is important only insofar as it leads us to an encounter with him now."⁵⁶

53. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 240.

54. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 31.

55. Cone, 31.

56. Cone, 31

Niebuhr's *Meaning of Revelation* helps to bridge black theology with black Pentecostalism. Niebuhr emphasizes that "Revelation cannot mean history... if it also means God."⁵⁷ The story of our lives is where divine revelation happens. It is connected to history; it makes the historical relevant to the contemporary through the reality of lives experience. Niebuhr asserts,

What prompted Christians in the past to confess their faith by telling the story of their life was more than a need for vivid illustration or for analogical reasoning. Their story was not a parable which could be replaced by another; it was irreplaceable and untranslatable. An internal compulsion rather than free choice led them to speak of what they knew by telling about Jesus Christ and their relation to God through him.⁵⁸

Black Pentecostals popularized the testimony service, a practice dating back to black folk religion. Testimony services are moments within black worship gatherings when the worship leaders or pastor invites attendees to stand spontaneously and share about the realness of God. To borrow from Niebuhr's language, testimony services are moments of "internal compulsion" that led "the saints"⁵⁹ to testify about the ways in which God interacts with the joys and troubles of everyday life.

Furthermore, Niebuhr's external history and internal history are helpful here. On the one hand, external history has to do with the "societies as made up of atomic individuals related to each other by external bonds."⁶⁰ For Pentecostals, the external bond

57. Niebuhr, *Meaning of Revelation*, 40.

58. Niebuhr, 34.

59. In the black Pentecostal tradition, baptism of the Spirit qualifies one as a saint. Members, then, are called "saints."

60. Niebuhr, 51.

is the connection with the history of the broader church through common faith and fellowship. Moreover, the internal bond is where revelation happens. Niebuhr explains that “in internal history, on the other hand, society is community of selves. Here we do not only live among other selves but they live in us and we in them. Relations here are not external but internal so that we are our relations and cannot be selves save as we are members of each other.”⁶¹ Such principles have important hermeneutical implications. God reveals God’s self through shared lived experiences. Niebuhr argues for both the external and internal histories because both are part of the collective human experience. In other words, human beings are participants in a continued external history that is realized amid current communal realities. Believers, moreover, discover the meaning of faith in both the past and present lived experience. Niebuhr notes,

When the evangelist of the New Testament and their successors pointed to history as the starting point of their faith and of their understanding of the world ... they did not speak of events, as impersonally apprehended, but rather of what had happened to them in their community. They recalled the critical point in their own life-time when they became aware of themselves in a new way... They turned to a past which was not gone but which endured in them as their memory, making them what they were. So for the later church, history was always the story of ‘our fathers,’ of ‘our Lord,’ and of the actions of ‘our God.’⁶²

Similarly, black Pentecostals see themselves in relation to the God of the ancestors and the embodiment of God’s incarnated presence by the Spirit. Cone says, “For black

61. Niebuhr, 51-52.

62. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 31.

theology, revelation is not just a past event, nor a contemporary event in which it is difficult to recognize the activity of God.” Black Pentecostals crystalize God’s revelation among them through concrete stories to prove that the Holy Spirit is at work among them. The Spirit of Pentecost is the revealed presence of God in everyday life.

Scripture

Cone says, “Black theology is biblical theology.”⁶³ Thus, scripture is a fifth source in black theology. In *Black Theology and Black Power*, Cone explains that, “The biblical emphasis on the freedom of [hu]man also means that one cannot allow another to define [ones’] existence. If the *imago Dei* means anything, it means that God has created [human beings] in such a way that [human’s] own destiny is inseparable from [one’s] relation to the Creator.”⁶⁴ In other words, scripture as source in black theology is more than a catalogue of propositions for living. It is rather the preaching of scripture that makes the Word come alive to affirm humanity and offer hope.

Through preaching, black Christians tend to relate to scripture as a sacred source of guidance and comfort. Through preaching, the “Word is made flesh” and dwells among God’s people. Cone explains,

Scripture does not make decisions for us. On the contrary, it is a theological source because of its power to ‘renew for us the disclosure of the holy which was the content of the primordial revelation.’ The God who is present today in our midst is the same God who was revealed in Jesus Christ as witnessed in the scriptures. By reading an account of God’s activity in the world as recorded in

63. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 32.

64. James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 137.

scripture, it is possible for a community [today] to experience the contemporary work of God in the world.... The Bible is inspired: by reading it a community can encounter the resurrected Jesus and thus be moved to risk everything for earthly freedom.⁶⁵

Black theology's appropriation of biblical authority is what I call relational-biblical, a hermeneutical model that emerges from an African-oriented communal and relational epistemology. A relational-biblical approach draws from Ricoeur's notion that the meaning of a text emerges out "in front of the text." Ricoeur expounds,

To understand oneself in front of a text in quite the contrary of projecting oneself and one's own beliefs and prejudices; it is to let the work and its world enlarge the horizon of the understanding which I have of myself... Thus the hermeneutical circle is not repudiated but displaced from a subjectivistic level to an ontological plane.⁶⁶

In other words, the power of the text is real through the embodiment of knowledge as inculcated among believers through preaching, involving tangible, oral, aural and visual dynamics. These elements are inherent to black American culture dating back to African ways of knowing.⁶⁷ Additionally, black people were restricted from formal education. So, reading scripture as a textbook for life is not part of historical black Christian formation. Rather, the preaching and bearing witness to the Word through lived worship has been a

65. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 34.

66. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences* translated and edited by John B. Thompson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 178.

67. John Gallegos, "African Pentecostal Hermeneutics," in *Pentecostal Theology in Africa*, edited by Clifton R. Clarke (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 45.

key source in black theology. In this way, the Word encounters experience and creates a new narrative that carves out freedom.

Slaves embraced scripture as authoritative in so far that they were convinced that the liberating God of the Hebrew people was present among them to liberate them. Both William Seymour and Charles H. Mason were sons of former slaves. They may have passed along the Christian hermeneutic into the fabric of black Pentecostalism.⁶⁸

In black Pentecostal theology, scripture is part of a broader hermeneutical structure similar to that of black theology, as Cone lays them out in *Black Theology of Liberation*. Therefore, black Pentecostals *engage* and *experience* scripture in a way that forges a key divergence between them and Evangelicals. Biblical primacy is present in black Pentecostalism for two reasons. The first black Pentecostals embraced the God-human relationship as more than a spiritual one; black Pentecostals believed God was with them to rewrite America's social narrative. Secondly, black Pentecostals believed that they had rediscovered the God-human relationship that early believers had, empowering them in their social situation just as it did for the Early Church.

While black Pentecostals have a high view of scripture, the narratives of scripture signify a God who dignifies disdained identity. Because many African Americans involved in the early Pentecostal movement were only one or two generations removed

68. Evidence of their relational-biblical hermeneutics appears in some of their sermons and writings. Each of them imagined scripture coming alive in the dynamics of lived experience. See William Seymour's sermons "Rivers of Living Water," "Receive Ye the Holy Ghost" and "Sanctified on the Cross" 312 Azusa Street. Online Source. <http://www.azusastreet.org/WilliamJSeymourSermons.htm>. Also, See Bishop Charles H. Mason's sermon, "Storms–Storms–Storms." In *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation*, ed. Douglas Jacobsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 216.

from slavery, Cone's treatment of black theology is apropos in a black Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Tradition

Cone offers tradition as the sixth source for black theology. Tradition refers to the theological reflection of the church upon the nature of Christianity from the time of the early church to the present day.⁶⁹ Tradition as theological source in the black church involves communal rituals. Rituals sustained the embodiment of religious life. Black rituals are culturally saturated and are concerned with the ways God resides among a suffering people. Cone asserts, "Regarding what is often called tradition, black theology perceives moments of authentic identification with the ethical implication of the gospel of Jesus, but they are rare."⁷⁰ Black theology's abandon of Christian orthodoxy made it easier for black Pentecostals to lead in the new "heretical" expression of the faith. Rituals, such as protests, and radical worship emerged as heretical traditions of spiritual and social hope.

Black Pentecostalism does not look to orthodox tradition as a primary theological source. It creates new traditions born of the suspicion that orthodoxy cannot be trusted as a responsible interpretation of the gospel. Just as in the broader black church, black Pentecostalism has invented and reinvented its own traditions, borrowing from other cultural and religious contexts. Moreover, black Pentecostals brought symbols and traditions from antecedent religious and cultural contexts into the worship practice. This may be evident in Mason's sermons in which he lifted African symbols in sermon

69. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 34.

70. Cone, 36.

illustrations and imposed new meaning. Another example would be the intentional inclusion of the African ring dance in black Pentecostal worship. In any case, black traditional religious symbols and practices gained new meaning in black Pentecostalism. They represented a praxis-oriented tradition that has taken religious and cultural tradition seriously.

The Missing Source: The Holy Spirit

Cone is known for explaining what Christ means in the face of black suffering. In *Black Theology and Black Power*, he builds a case for Christological freedom on Galatians 5:1: “For freedom, Christ has set us free.” Black freedom is bound up in the liberating work of Christ. Cone extrapolates that the message of the gospel is that Christ came into the world with a mission to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8). His whole life was a deliberate offense against satanic power that held humanity captive.⁷¹ This Christological development continues throughout Cone’s body of work.

While Christ is central to black theology, the language and work of the Holy Spirit seems peripheral in black theological discourse. The black Pentecostal scholar notes the weakness of a pneumatological integration in Cone’s work. For example, in *Black Theology and Black Power*, Cone falls short of an elaboration on the power of the Holy Spirit at work in a Christ-centered social freedom. Another example is in *Spirituals and the Blues*; Cone speaks of black spirituality but limits his treatment to black lived experience. Perhaps, he could not comprehend the black Pentecostal contribution to the struggle because he was blindsided by the emphasis on the Holy Spirit, not realizing the extent of the role of the Spirit in the remedy of black suffering. Cone comes closest to

71. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 40.

Pentecostal logic in his treatment of revelation as a source of theology and his occasional mention the Holy Spirit in a small portion of his work. There is at least an intuitive reference at play in his notion of “encountering God now.”⁷² Yet, Cone falls short of emphasizing that the God-human encounter happens through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Black Pentecostals believe that “encountering God now” is the ultimate remedy to white supremacy and other oppressive systems.

Black Pentecostals believe that the work of the Holy Spirit advances the liberation to which Cone pointed. The work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the moving of the Spirit in an esoteric or hyper-spiritual manner. While there is not a compendium of scholarly literature on the matter, black Pentecostals have historically engaged in social advocacy work. From working with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s campaign in Memphis against unfair wages in 1968 to the black Pentecostal involvement in today’s Black Lives Matter movement, black Pentecostals have understood the Holy Spirit as divine a mechanism for “encountering God now” in the context of lived struggle.

Theologian Diana L. Hayes makes connections between an experience-based spirituality and the work of the Holy Spirit. Hayes explains that the Holy Spirit was at work in the history of the black experience. She explains that it was indeed the Holy Spirit that “forged the strength which enabled [black folk] to ‘move on up a little higher’.”⁷³ The black Pentecostal practical theologian appreciates that without reservation, Hayes identifies the Holy Spirit as the often “unnamed spirit” that is present in the black experience. This perspective is consistent with Lovett’s 1978 proposal for a

72. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 31.

73. Diana L. Hayes, *No Crystal Stair: Womanist Spirituality* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016), xvi.

“pneumatological liberation theology” for black Pentecostals that “is not the product of human ideology but divine ‘new creation.’”⁷⁴

A pneumatological liberation theology involves both the re-reading of scripture and the re-reading of human experience in search of where the Spirit is present, leading, correcting, and liberating. Lovett’s pneumatological liberation theology involves dogmatic insistence that liberation is always the result of the presence of the Spirit. Authentic liberation can never occur apart from genuine Pentecostal encounter and, likewise, authentic Pentecostal encounter cannot occur unless liberation becomes the consequence. It is another way of saying that no [person] can experience the fullness of the Spirit and be a *bona fide* racist.⁷⁵

The Azusa Street Mission and subsequent Pentecostal movements have influenced all of Christian history. These movements have impacted the global expansion of Spirit-embbrace within Catholic and Protestant traditions. It is fitting that a closer investigation of the black-led movement at Azusa Street that spawn the American version of Pentecostalism in the early 1900s speaks and develops new paths for theological discourse. This paper has argued for the suitability of discourse between black theology and black Pentecostalism to expose sources that will expand black religion vis-à-vis black Pentecostalism. While black Pentecostals have participated in the struggle against white supremacy, there are more chains to be broken and more captives to set free.

Research Conclusions

74. Leonard Lovett, “Black Holiness-Pentecostalism: Implications for Ethics and Social Transformation” (PhD diss., Emory University, 1978), 162.

75. Leonard Lovett, “Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement,” in *Aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Origins*, edited by Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 140.

Coming to terms with blackness as a theological source 1) is crucial in defining distinctives in black Pentecostalism, 2) sheds light on the rich heritage of black culture, history and experience, and 3) inspires black Pentecostals to actively participate in the liberating work of the Spirit in regard to the social situation of God's people. Black Pentecostal faith is sweltering with prophetic agency to address social ills and advance theological significance in pursuit of the good life.

CHAPTER FOUR. SOURCES: PENTECOSTAL PUBLIC THEOLOGY¹

Introduction: Narratives as Theological Sources

Black Pentecostal narratives are authoritative sources for theologians to consider. The authority of the pastor is highly esteemed in Pentecostalism. For the purpose of this study, the ones with strong social prophetic ministries deserve deeper analysis. Dating back to Niebuhr's chapter, "The Story of Our Life," in *The Meaning of Revelation*,² postliberal theologians recognized that narratives play both descriptive and constructive roles in theology. Ricoeur posits that narratives are useful for carving out new insights for lived theology.³ Further, black church historian Adam Bond notes that narratives have been characteristic in African American public theology and should be taken seriously in a praxis-oriented study for contemporary implications.⁴

Narratives may be even more important in the experience-based framework of black Pentecostal theology. Within this young movement, Pentecostal scholars continue to establish normative sources that meet the criteria for authenticity while remaining faithful to Pentecostal tenets. Without longstanding thinkers like Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley, narratives of pastoral ministries emerge as sources for doing

1. A version of this chapter appeared as "Emerging African American Pentecostal Sources in Public Theology," in *International Journal of Public Theology* 13, 4: 1-22 (Brill, 2019).

2. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

3. See Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics of Action*, edited by Richard Kearney (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 6-7 and Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 181.

4. Adam L. Bond, *Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Black Public Faith: The Imposing Preacher* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1.

public theology in the black Pentecostal tradition. Establishing authority is crucial to the advancement of scholarship and public theology.⁵

The following models of narrative theology emanate from the leadership hermeneutics of selected social prophetic ministers.⁶ Through the personal journals, publications, scholarship, worship patterns, and ministries of black Pentecostal preachers, these leaders are deemed models on at least two fronts: 1) they function as authority within the black Pentecostal tradition, and 2) they exemplify innovative hermeneutics for engaging public affairs.

American Pentecostalism emerged from the symphony of believers who united under the banner of holiness at the Azusa Street Revival. The early Pentecostal movement drew public attention because of its positive impact on race relations. Initially, blacks and whites worshipped together in electrifying, spirit-filled revival. Eyewitness Frank Bartleman wrote, “There were far more white people than black people coming. The ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood of Christ.”⁷ However, as the

5. This study does not attempt to extract theological tenets per se. Rather, it invites the reader to further study of the rich heritage of African American Pentecostal public ministries for potential insights for contemporary African American Pentecostal theology.

6 See Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011). However, Kim and Volf’s work informs this study in various ways, namely, Volf’s discussion on human flourishing as the goal of liberation. Also, Volf points to the prophetic nature of the church in the pursuit of human flourishing. He falls short of acknowledging the exemplary prophetic faith in the robust history of the Black Church. Kim’s dialogical approach in *Theology in the Public Sphere* reminds the public theologian that public debate is necessary for communal discovery of difference but also reveals that other religious views may intersect with Christian ones toward common good. Kim speaks of a variety of global examples from India, Korea, and Europe but does not include the treatment of the most notorious examples of public theology in modern times – Black South African and Black American history. See, Sebastian Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (London: SCM Press, 2011). However, this essay builds upon Max Stackhouse and Elaine Graham’s work in public theology; their perspectives align more closely with black leadership’s social prophetic public theology. Just as Volf and Kim, neither Stackhouse nor Graham acknowledges the role of the Black Church in public theology.

7. Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It Was in the Beginning* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2017), 32.

pressures of life under Jim Crow segregation⁸ intensified, whites expressed dissatisfaction with the leadership of William J. Seymour, as well as subsequent leaders, G.T. Haywood and C. H. Mason.

By 1924, this “miracle” of racial integration had starkly declined, gradually giving way to white ascendancy over some of the major Pentecostal denominations. Black Pentecostal historian M.E. Golder reported, “...the movement took on the racial pattern of the cultural structure of society and deceived the Spirit of Azusa.”⁹ While the movement was not meant to *resolve* the American race problem,¹⁰ the substantive work of social prophetic pastors must not be overlooked.

Socially Prophetic Leadership at the Margins

Leading 20th-century black pastors believed that Pentecostal spirituality compelled them to move beyond an ‘otherworldly’ focus to engage in the struggle for liberation of the oppressed. The African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal-Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, and Progressive Baptist denominations all took shape in response to the exclusion of black people from traditional (read, white) worship. The duality of worship, the vitality of faith, and the fight for justice and liberation were embedded in these denominational formations. As a result, church members generally viewed pastors as both shepherds tending to the needs of the flock and leaders speaking up for liberation and equality. Among those early abolitionists were

8. For more on the Jim Crow era, see Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis, *Jim Crow America: A Documentary History* (University of Arkansas Press, 2009).

9. Roswith Gerloff, interview with M.E. Golder, October 15, 1973, as printed in Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies, Volume 2* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 499.

10. Perhaps black Pentecostals resorted to more profound spirituality in the refuge found in their congregations.

Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Isabella Baumfree. Later, recognizable names from the nascent Civil Rights Movement include Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther King, Hosea Williams, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Barbara Jordan, Samuel D. Proctor, Myrlie Edwards, Andrew Young, Jr., Jesse Jackson, and Al Sharpton.¹¹

Close examination of Pentecostal leaders who fought for social justice reveals a continuum of models. Some leaders partnered with pastors from the denominations named above; others led sub-movements. Approaches varied based on: philosophy, personal giftings, geographical location, personal interests, and congregational concerns. However, regardless of how theological perspectives differed, black Pentecostals have held fast to the covenant of divine deliverance, the promise that God will make life better for black people in America.

Socially prophetic preachers have often been marginalized within Pentecostalism. However, as revealed in the forthcoming illustrations, prophetic pastors were convinced that the Pentecostal experience equips Spirit-filled people for effective social advocacy. They trusted that the Spirit on Jesus to preach and realize redemption (Luke 4:18). For such pastors, the gift of the Holy Spirit is God's endowment upon God's people to bear witness in the public square. Many pastors facilitated ministries reflecting God's vision of liberation. The hermeneutical lens through which leaders see God's vision can be a resource for emergent public theologians.

Prominent 20th century black Pentecostal pastors confronted social injustice and led in advancing God's vision of liberation. Among these were Laura Adorkor Kofi of the African Universal Church, Bishop Robert Clarence Lawson of Church of Our Lord

11. Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, April 6, 1963.

Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Bishop Arthur M. Brazier of Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, and Bishop Herbert Daughtry of the House of the Lord Churches. This brief list presents marginalized leaders who represent different strands of leadership yet remained invested in the fight for justice through sermons, writings, and civic initiatives.

Kofi, Lawson, Brazier, and Daughtry were public theologians whose leadership hermeneutics involved Pentecostal spirituality with a new vision, a foresight of liberation amid social suffering. These pastors could not escape the painful awareness that while they preached baptism of the Spirit with cathartic spirituality, beyond the context of worship, black people lived under Jim Crow segregation. Pentecostals claimed to be advocates of spiritual warfare, as in common Pentecostal jargon: “Go into the enemy’s camp and take back what the enemy stole!” Seldom is this theological claim on power over the enemy appropriated as a spiritual impetus for social prophetic expression.

Origins: The Black Church and Public Theology

In *Shaping Public Theology*, Paeth, Breitenberg, Jr, and Lee suggest that “Theology is public precisely because it is grounded in the Christian imperative to speak about questions of social justice, political responsibility, civic virtue, and the proper ends of government in a way that is genuinely reflective of the Christian faith yet also applicable to the questions that motivate a religiously and socially pluralistic society.”¹² The African American faith tradition captures the essence of public theology in that it influenced the reshaping of American society. It is no secret that after legalized slavery was abolished, the United States then shifted into a system of *de facto* segregation. White

12. Scott R. Paeth, E. Harold Breitenberg, Jr and Hak Joon Lee, *Shaping Public Theology: Selections from the Writing of Max L. Stackhouse* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 2014), xvi-xvii.

Americans not only harbored oppressive sentiments against blacks, they also acted out those sentiments through systemic racism: lynching, police brutality, denial of voting rights, burned churches and lynching, among other heinous acts. The nation enacted legislation that maintained structures and kept black people from experiencing the fullness of being human, the freedom to be black without apology or submission, and to pursue the proverbial yet elusive American Dream.

Black faith traditions emanated primarily from a praxis orientation with reflection on God-related questions in communal and personal struggles. Strategic reactions within black public theology were often responses to the challenges of white supremacy, and it was black faith that influenced a society in deep moral decline. To this day, everyday conversations among African Americans often involve integrating scriptures and God-talk. From the unchurched to the most faithful, African American culture is saturated with spirituality through the origins of the Black Church.¹³ More importantly, public theology suffused black church history. Bond notes, “Black public faith ideas stem from a long tradition of black preachers, theologians, and ethicists discontented with the social order in America. This black public faith, born out of the African American religious experience of making sense of faith in the public sphere, challenged white supremacy at every turn.”¹⁴

13. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya coined the term ‘Black Church’ from a sociological point of view. The term mainly seeks to describe the common black religious experience amid the varieties of denominations and traditions within black church history. For more on the meaning of the ‘Black Church’, see C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University Press, 1990).

14. Adam L. Bond, *Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Black Public Faith: The Imposing Preacher* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 8.

Pentecostal pastors have understood the call to ministry as a divine call to public leadership. Through decades of slavery and the ‘separate but unequal’ exclusionary laws of Jim Crow segregation, black pastors viewed deliverance from oppression through the Exodus narrative (Exodus:1:1-40:38). Just as God called Moses to lead Israel out of bondage in Egypt, God called these pastors to lead black people out of bondage in America. However, black religious scholars such as Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone expressed concern for an apparent social apathy among black Pentecostals.¹⁵ Pentecostalism had grown larger than most black denominations; Wilmore and Cone found it odd that they did not maximize the power of numbers to protest Jim Crow segregation. In fact, Black Pentecostals tended to focus on sanctification, congregational life, communal spirituality, and personal faith, summed up by the adage: “We are in the world, but not of it.”¹⁶

Theologian Dale Andrews explains that the ‘church as a refuge’ was not an uncommon way that black Christians understood the church in a racially hostile world. However, Pentecostals took “church as a refuge” a bit further. They believed that baptism in the Spirit forged lines of distinction between “the sanctified folks”¹⁷ and the “world.” In this way, Pentecostalism gave them a sense of dignity. The broader society saw blackness as a social malady. Pentecostals were a unique brand of Christianity rejected within the larger Christian world. So, black Pentecostals were twice rejected. They

15. Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith Through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 69.

16. Although any direct connection is unlikely, the Pentecostal adage of “being in the world but not of it,” is similar to the picture Dietrich Bonhoeffer paints of the church as “sanctuary in the midst of [the] world... redeemed... out of ... the world” in his chapter on “The Saints” in *Cost of Discipleship*. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 273.

17. The reference to “sanctified folks” is a common colloquial reference to African American Pentecostals.

persisted in confidence that to be “sanctified” was to be “otherworldly” by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, they re-casted what the broader society and the broader black Christian community thought of them in light of the conviction that as long as they were on God’s side, the world could do them no harm.

Socially Prophetic Leadership in Action

The Kofi Model

This first model is named for Rev. Laura Adorkor Kofi, affectionately known as Mother Kofi. According to historian Vibert White, Jr., “By 1927, Kofi had become America’s most sought-after black female speaker.”¹⁸ A native of Asofa, Ghana, West Africa, Kofi was the daughter of an African king and minister.¹⁹ In the early 1900s, while in her native village, young Laura said she was having visions that God was calling her to America to help Africans there.²⁰ Initially, Kofi demurred following the prompting of the Spirit. She chose to minister in other African countries and nearly died from an unknown illness. Amid her bouts with illness, God reminded Kofi of His call on her life to help Africans in America; she finally surrendered to the call.²¹

After arriving in New York, Kofi entered fully into the African American context. Her followers and church members were primarily African American. While she undoubtedly drew upon her Ghanaian religious life and experience, Kofi’s socially

18. Vibert White, Jr., “Mother Laura Adorkor Kofi: The Female Marcus Garvey,” in *Africa in Florida: Five Hundred Years of African Presence in the Sunshine State*, edited by Amanda B. Carlson and Robin Poyner (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014), 210. See Estrela Y. Alexander, ed. *Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism. Volume 1: North America* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 255.

19. Estrela Y. Alexander, ed. *Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism. Volume 1: North America* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 255.

20. Alexander, 255.

21. Alexander, 255.

prophetic ministry took place within the context of African American lived reality in the Jim Crow era.

Kofi was a prolific preacher and preached wherever she could. She was guest preacher at churches in Chicago, Detroit, and New York City. She preached on street corners and in fellowship halls from way North to Deep South. Throughout her travels, Kofi witnessed firsthand blacks moving North in search of a better life, yet running into the same racism, bigotry, discrimination and slum living as was in the south.²²

Kofi preached that God intends for black Americans to thrive – not merely survive – in the inhumane living conditions associated with Jim Crow’s segregation. Kofi’s leadership model was, moreover, similar to the Harriet Tubman prophetic approach to the Underground Railroad. Just as Tubman sensed a prophetic call to lead enslaved people from the South to the North, Kofi applied her prophetic call to lead African Americans in a return to Africa.

White also reports that Kofi told African Americans about the vision that brought her to America: “She juxtaposed African culture, history, and growth with that of Europe and the United States, presenting America as a place for black oppression but Africa as the land of black liberty.”²³ Kofi was convinced that God gave her a revelation to liberate African Americans by taking them back to Africa to create an independent community there.²⁴

During her travels, Mother Kofi met Jamaican-born nationalist Marcus Garvey, whose organization was the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

22. White, Jr., “Mother Laura Adorkor Kofi,” 207.

23. White, 209.

24. White, 209.

Garvey's mission was also to transport people from the African diaspora back to Africa. Once Kofi joined UNIA, Garvey enlisted her help and rallied her followers to join, as well. This female Pentecostal preacher's popularity was an asset to Garvey's organization. Kofi's followers were soon convinced that she was a 'prophet' sent by God to help them, just as she had testified of her vision in Africa. Apparently, Garvey grew envious of the female leader's popularity and he and Kofi had an unpleasant parting of ways.

In 1925, while Garvey was incarcerated for mail fraud, Kofi's preaching platform grew exponentially. With traditional Pentecostal fervor, she packed churches, theatres and arenas with tens of thousands of people.²⁵ Upon his release, Garvey could not compete with Kofi's momentum, and African Americans became increasingly enthralled by Kofi. For many, it was their first time hearing a preacher from Africa, especially one who spoke of freedom, pride and strength. White's account of Kofi's message:

The African Leader constantly spoke on the greatness of Africa, the wealth of its soil and people; but she also addressed the divine calling of responsible black Americans to make the continent a better place for its people. She viewed black people as being spiritually superior to whites and as having an older culture and greater civilization than those of Europeans.²⁶

Kofi seemed to speak with greater authority than Garvey did. As a result, blacks flocked to her more than to Garvey. Soon, Kofi's widespread prophetic leadership spawned her own organization, the African Universal Church and Commercial League. She went on to

25. White, 209.

26. White, 211.

plant churches throughout Florida and in Mobile, Alabama,²⁷ with headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida.²⁸ While the churches came under this organization, Kofi intended for the organization to establish communities of worship with a mission similar to that of Garvey's UNIA. Kofi grounded her organization's nationalist commitment more closely with Christian commitments than Garvey had. For instance, she did not allow fund-raising dances and nationalist drills on Sunday. Yet, this African king's daughter knew that life in the motherland would be better for African Americans than the life they lived in America. Kofi was convinced that Garvey was right about returning to the motherland, as evidenced in her adopting the UNIA's motto: "One God, One Aim, One Destiny."²⁹ However, Kofi was also staunchly critical of Garvey's pursuit of God's will while disrespecting the faith. Her nationalist vision was to get her followers grounded in the faith, first, then progress toward the ultimate goal of returning to Africa.

In 1928, only eight years after Kofi came to the United States, the young prophet's life was cut short at the age of 35.³⁰ An assassin from Garvey's organization went to Kofi's church in Miami, Florida, and shot her in the head while she was preaching to a packed house.³¹ Not only was her life cut short, her mission also faltered. After Kofi's death, her followers split the organization and the mission was never

27. Alexander, *Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism*, 255.

28 "Florida Frontiers 'Mother Laura Adorkor Kofi'," at the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Florida. No pages. Online resource: <https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/article/106> (accessed 3 January 2019).

29. Barbara Bair, "Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hand unto God: Laura Kofi and the Gendered Vision of Redemption in the Garvey Movement," in *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism*, edited by Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 41.

30. Alexander, *Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism*, 256.

31. Alexander, 256.

realized.³² Kofi's model with an emphasis on identity and belonging remains one of consideration in a society in which young black Americans are increasingly in search of belonging and identity. Perhaps, Kofi's model offers insight for new epistemological reflections on how the African heritage might speak to lingering questions within the African American context in regard to identity and belonging.

The Kofi model involves a hermeneutic of mobility. Instead of helping African Americans cope with the harsh realities of Jim Crow segregation or speaking "truth to power," the Kofi leadership model pursues a return "home." Home is a place of belonging. With the Kofi model, one discovers true help in a place of belonging rather than a new place where one is dehumanized and unwanted. Kofi agreed with Garvey that America is a place where black people are not treated with dignity. Kofi's prophetic model is, therefore, twofold: 1) the restoration of human dignity, and 2) the return to a place of belonging, a place of affirmation – that place is called home.

The Lawson Model

The second model is named for Robert Clarence Lawson. Bishop Lawson is the founder of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ (COOLJC), a Pentecostal denomination headquartered in Harlem, New York. COOLJC is most known among Pentecostals for the baptism "in Jesus's name" formula; the traditional Christian baptism being in "the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."³³ Lawson's legacy extends beyond the

32. Alexander, 256.

33. COOLJC is a strand of Pentecostalism, along with Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, United Pentecostal Church, Way of the Cross, Bible Way Churches, Higher Ground Assembly Churches, and others who believe that Acts 2:38 and Acts 19:5 reveal the baptism formula espoused by the early Church.

sacrament of baptism. At a time when discussing the race problem in Pentecostal churches was not popular, Lawson devoted much of his ministry to social justice.

Lawson, as did Kofi, preached in churches, street corners and other public venues. However, the Lawson philosophy of help empowered the oppressed to believe that they could flourish where they were. The socially prophetic landscape of the Lawson model involves confronting demonic spirits exemplified in oppressive systems. This model assumes the pastor's leadership in dismantling structures that keep people from the full experience of God's love.³⁴

The Lawson model employs a Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-driven message on behalf of oppressed humanity. As such, this model partners with non-Christian leaders to advance the mission. Key theological elements of this model include the fullness of God in Christ and God reconciling the world to God's self. Like a two-edged sword, the Lawson model challenges complicity among Christian leaders while speaking truth to power. Initiatives in this model are preaching the Gospel and publishing materials that condemn social injustice.

The Lawson model is grounded in optimism: through Christ-centered, biblically motivated leadership, American society can change. The responsibility of the pastor is to guide the congregation in communal piety and to advocate for a society transformed into a loving family. This model encompasses ministry for the Church and society. Lawson preached that racism was antithetical to Christ's message of love. His concern about society inspired him to take his message to the public square through a radio ministry. In

34. See 1 Corinthians 10:5.

the classic Pentecostal “cry loud and spare not” fashion, Lawson preached publicly that racism is a sin. He also aired sermons that criticized black and white Pentecostal pastors for reticence in responding to blatant injustice.

The Lawson model advances a dialogical approach to public theology through interpretation of the Pentecostal adage, “in the world but not of it.” Lawson understood the “sanctified life” as one of public dialogue in partnership with an ecumenical community. This participation does not demean the sanctified way of life. Rather, it displays Pentecostal theology on the platform of public engagement. This approach of multi-faith collaboration is based on the peaceful pursuit of justice and equality. Lawson’s participation in the fight against social sins allowed him to be among the early Pentecostal pastors who stood publicly with black ecumenical and interfaith communities.

In 1957, Lawson was the only Pentecostal pastor to speak at the first Civil Rights March on Washington at the Lincoln Memorial. He stood with other giants of the movement: Martin Luther King Jr., A. Phillip Randolph, Shirley Chisholm, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and Ralph Abernathy.³⁵ Lawson’s advocacy for human dignity was further evident in 1959 when he hosted the African Freedom Day Conference at Refuge Temple.³⁶ Guests included African dignitaries, as well as Nelson A Rockefeller, Robert

35. Robert C. Spellman and Mabel L. Thomas, *The Life, Legend and Legacy of Bishop R. C. Lawson* (Scotch Plains: Privately Printed, 1983), 55. Lawson participated in the ‘Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom’: 1957 Civil Rights March on Washington. This first March on Washington drew an attendance of approximately 25,000 people. Lawson died in 1961. See “The Life and Legacy of Bishop R.C. Lawson.” <http://bishoprclawson2.blogspot.com/2014/09/bishop-lawson-first-march-on-washington.html> (accessed 3 January 2019).

36. “Refuge Temple Picked for ‘Freedom Day’,” (*The New York Age*, April 4, 1959), 4. Also, see “1959, April 15: Malcolm X Speech at the First African Liberation Day,” Rastafari.tv: The Parallel Connection between Prophecy and History, last modified February 3, 2017, 23:14:11, <https://rastafari.tv/1959-april-15-malcolm-x-speech-at-the-first-african-liberation-day/>. The history is also

F. Wagner, and Adam Clayton Powell. Malcolm X, controversial leader in the Nation of Islam, was a keynote speaker from the pulpit of a Pentecostal church.³⁷

As does the Kofi model, the Lawson model centralizes preaching in faith formation. Different from Kofi's hermeneutical method of mobility, however, Lawson promotes writing as an effective medium for penetrating America's white-dominant society. Writing fosters intellectual insight and advances theological reasoning. Accordingly, this model values education and entrepreneurship as effective mechanisms for the liberation of oppressed people.

Lawson was a prolific writer whose treatment of social justice is featured in his 1969 publication, *Anthropology of Jesus Christ, Our Kinsman*.³⁸ In this book, he first critiques racism as a social sickness, setting up the theological assumption that American society is inflicted with the sin of racism. One must investigate God's original vision for humankind to envision what society should look like. Jesus is God's solution to sin; therefore, Lawson was convinced that Jesus is the divine plan to rid society of racism. As Douglas Jacobsen put it, "While [Lawson's] theology was rooted in a Pentecostal understanding of God and the world, his anti-racist vision clearly transcended the movement."³⁹

Lawson's public theology was rooted in a longstanding belief that created the constitutions of the first black churches. That conviction is that God created all people.

referenced in Alexander Stewart, "Entreating for Justice: The Social Activism of Robert Clarence Lawson," an essay presented at the 48th International Congress of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Bishop R. C. Lawson Lecture Series, April 7, 2018.

37. "Refuge Temple Picked for 'Freedom Day'," (*The New York Age*, April 4, 1959), 4.

38. See Robert C. Lawson, *The Anthropology of Jesus Christ Our Kinsman* (New York: Church of Christ, 1969).

39. Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Press, 2003), 266.

The fundamental conviction is that human equality is essential to God’s ideal world. In an article published in 1947, Lawson criticized racism saying,

It is extremely difficult for [a person] to maintain even in the Church a semblance of human dignity. At every turn [black people are] hindered at places [they] cannot enter because of [their] color; churches, schools, restaurants, theatres, lunch counters, restrooms, not to mention the wide-spread job barriers. Living is made like a convict serving out a sentence.⁴⁰

In another essay published the same year, Lawson wrote,

The hydra-headed monster of prejudice rears its ugly head as a challenge to the Holy Spirit, who says that brotherly [and sisterly] love should continue regardless of race or color – that each one should esteem [another] better than [oneself] –that [the one who] is greatest among you, let [that person] be servant of all.⁴¹

As evident here, Lawson’s pneumatology was connected to the hermeneutic through which he read scripture. Lawson understood scripture to suggest that the Holy Spirit promotes a better world than the one black society presently endured.

The Lawson model draws leadership inspiration from theological interpretations of scripture. Lawson’s leadership hermeneutic involved biblical lenses common among Pentecostals of his day, an approach that may be understood as the “Bible reading” method. This method involved reading scripture through the lens of contemporary experience. Black Pentecostals did not limit the Bible reading method to the Pentecostal spiritual experience of Acts 2; they read all scripture as applicable to contemporary life.

40. Robert C. Lawson, “The Greatest Evil in This World Is Race Prejudice,” in *For the Defense of the Gospel: The Writings of Bishop R.C. Lawson* (New York: Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, 1972), 253.

41. Robert C. Lawson, “Sparks from The Anvil,” in *For the Defense of the Gospel*, 326-27.

This means that God speaks to contemporary circumstances through the Bible. Lawson's leadership hermeneutic vis-à-vis scriptural claims inspired his progressive view of a Pentecostal pastor. Certainly, Lawson stood out among other Pentecostals who employed similar regard for scripture but who lacked Lawson's grasp on biblical languages and other interpretive resources. Pentecostal archivist Alexander Stewart points out that "Lawson was unique for he had a working knowledge of Greek, Hebrew and ancient history, which was uncommon among African American Pentecostal pastors. Therefore, his message contained a substance atypical of theirs."⁴²

Furthermore, the Lawson model takes seriously the Crucifixion and the Incarnation. This approach recognizes that God's love as personified in the risen Christ was to reconcile humankind to God and advance God's vision of a united human family. The model comingles the work of Christ with the work of the Holy Spirit. Lawson reasoned that because human beings are relatives of the incarnated Christ, "Jesus had Negro blood in Him."⁴³ Predicting the shock of such a statement, Lawson posits,

It is vitally necessary and helpful, especially when the wave of prejudice is causing so many to sin through the egotism of race-pride, thinking themselves better than other people because of race, and separating themselves in the body of Christ through the shame of their [brothers and sisters] of the colored races.⁴⁴

42. Alexander Stewart, "Entreating for Justice: The Social Activism of Robert Clarence Lawson," an essay presented at the 48th International Congress of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Bishop R. C. Lawson Lecture Series, April 7, 2018.

43. Robert C. Lawson, 'Japhethitic Contribution to the Anthropology of Jesus Christ', in *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation*, edited by Douglas Jacobsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 200.

44. Lawson, 200–2001.

The profundity of Jesus, having “Negro blood,” has multiple implications. First, inasmuch as Jesus has the blood of black Americans in his veins, he could identify with the predicament black Americans were facing. Secondly, Jesus has black people’s blood in him, so how can other professing Christians so vehemently reject God’s black children? Third, Jesus, with black people’s blood flowing through His veins, authorizes black people to embrace blackness fully. Fourth, identifying with a Jesus who has black people’s blood might explain why Lawson built transcontinental relationships with leaders from African countries and planted numerous churches in Africa. Lawson encouraged African Americans to gain a sense of dignity from the African Diaspora.

Lawson linked anthropological insight with theology through the connection between Christ’s incarnation and atonement when he says, “The fact that Christ had [N]egro blood in him is vitally connected with our redemption through Calvary.”⁴⁵ Christ’s comingled blood proves that at the cross, Jesus became the “kinsman redeemer,” a concept spoken of in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Leviticus 25:48; 25:25 Ruth 3:12–13).

Lawson reasons,

If he is kinsman redeemer of all having their blood in his veins, then whosoever hateth [a] brother [or sister] hateth his Lord because whatever race that [person] who [one] hateth may be of, our Lord is of that race.... He is our Savior... by virtue of the fact that representatives of all of the entire human race flows through his veins, therefore, all have the same interest and right in Him and none can say

45. Lawson, 202.

to another, ‘You have no part in Him.’ ‘He is our Savior’ for he became our kinsman.⁴⁶

Lawson believed the crucifixion was an invitation for humanity to be reconciled to God through Christ. It was God's plan to mingle humanity's array of blood lineages into one blood of Christ, the Redeemer. His theology regarding the blood of Christ maintains that the Crucifixion communicated a profound message about God’s love.

Lawson saw no separation between his theology of God’s love and concern for humanity and the social implications of that love. For instance, God’s love does not look at economically depressed, uneducated, underprivileged people without reacting accordingly. The social implications of God’s love compel the Spirit-filled leader to act on behalf of disadvantaged people.

The Lawson model integrates education and entrepreneurship to help underprivileged people thrive socially. Lawson viewed education and entrepreneurship as essential mechanisms for expressing divine love in action.⁴⁷ He established the R.C. Lawson Institute, a boarding school in Southern Pines, North Carolina, and founded an orphanage in North Carolina, as well.⁴⁸ He also founded a bookstore, printing press, grocery stores, funeral homes and other businesses to elevate the black economic profile. In 1927, Lawson’s passion for economic and social activism led him to develop the African American Pentecostal community of Lawsonville, in a majority white New York neighborhood.

The Brazier Model

46. Lawson, 209.

47. Alexander, *The Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism*, 260.

48. Alexander, 260.

The third model is named for Bishop Arthur Brazier, founder of the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, a congregation within the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. Similar to Kofi and Lawson, Brazier saw preaching as a key element of public theology and leadership hermeneutics. He led his congregation in social advocacy to respond to issues that affected black people in his church and the city, with particular concern for urban youth and gangs. Similar to Lawson's perspective, Brazier insisted on black independence. He believed racism was not the worst aspect of Jim Crow. Instead, he deemed the pursuit of self-determination a far greater threat to white supremacy than the freedom to drink from the same water fountain.

Education is central to self-determination in the Brazier model. Moreover, this model emphasizes community organizing and non-ecclesial, black-led nonprofit organizations as a means of advancing a more just society. More importantly, the Brazier model lauds grassroots leadership. In a country where two sources of power – money and people– form the body politic,⁴⁹ the Brazier leadership model directs economically disadvantaged people to exploit the communal advantage. Reminiscent of emerging liberation theologies, the Brazier model is a “power to the people” approach, a prophetic model designed to motivate people toward communal self-reliance. At the same time, this model recognizes the psychological ramifications of lived social abuse and, therefore, emphasizes collective self-determination as a precondition to the community's successful pursuit of betterment. The Brazier model was developed in the 1960s at the height of the Black Power movement and the formation of the Black Panthers. Brazier was convinced

49. Arthur M. Brazier, *Black Self-Determination: The Story of the Woodlawn Organization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 21.

that the power of the people was needed to forge the self-determination essential in black liberation.

Brazier links the philosophy of self-determination to a theology of pastoral leadership in *Black Self-determination*, a book he published five years after the passing of the Civil Rights Act. From a public theology perspective, self-determination has to do with the power God intends all people to have. Black people have been deprived of the social power to rise above white supremacy and the structural strongholds that continued holding back blacks in America from the power to pursue advancement.⁵⁰ In Brazier's theology, the church plays a role in motivating African Americans to believe in communal power.

In a chapter titled, "The Uses of Power and the Role of the Church," Brazier reasons that "at a fundamental level every church is participating all the time in the oppressive status quo, either to change it or to uphold it, or some mixture of the two."⁵¹ Furthermore, he argues that "as an institution [the church] is inextricably bound with other social structures and institutions, [and the church] is maintaining the oppressive status quo unless it makes strenuous efforts to take the side of those who are trying to upset it for the sake of those who suffer under it."⁵² This is why Brazier's leadership hermeneutic includes confronting attitudes and structures that perpetuate oppression and promote human empowerment.

Brazier's *Black Self-Determination* contains the story of and rationale for The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). TWO was established in Chicago's Hyde Park area

50. Brazier, 21.

51. Brazier, 133.

52. Brazier, 133.

during the early 1960s. This community development organization was formed to take on as many problems as possible and soon realized the value of strategic progress.⁵³

Indigenous leadership is part of the strategy. Brazier asserts,

Not only must the community organization deal with problems that are of concern..., it must also draw upon indigenous leadership. Indigenous leadership is imperative because the black [person] must learn that [s]/he does not have to rely upon leadership that the white power structure appoints for [their community].

When this happens, as it has in the past, whites invariably take over. Black organizations need their own leaders.⁵⁴

Brazier admits that “the price of acquiring power is conflict and confrontation, and neither need be violent. Black Americans must seize the right and power of self-determination now.”⁵⁵

During the modern Civil Rights Movement, Brazier was a Northern Pentecostal ally with a Baptist preacher from the Deep South, Martin Luther King, Jr. Corresponding to the differences in denominational traditions, their theologies and worship practices diverged. Yet, Brazier and King shared a common commitment to authentic Christianity; both men cared deeply for suffering people and demanded prophetic action from the church. In *Black Self-Determination*, Brazier argues that “black people need a way out of the ghetto into an open society in which they can freely move, and they need control over

53. Brazier, 31.

54. Brazier, 32.

55. Brazier, 5. Brazier’s philosophy of self-determination recaptures a philosophy that goes back to Frederick Douglass. In his 1857 speech entitled ‘If there is no struggle, there is no progress’, Douglass asserted, “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

their life situation within their community wherever they are.”⁵⁶ Achieving this goal involves breaking the back of Jim Crow laws and white supremacist structures. Brazier could not acquiesce to the anesthetization of communal spirituality. For him, the Spirit of Pentecost requires responding to cries for help from run-down ghettos. Throughout his ministry, Brazier maintained a didactic pastoral ministry in which he taught his mostly black followers the power of tenacity and self-determined progress. He believed that public theology that speaks to both audiences would advance the change he envisioned. Brazier’s prophetic social ministry was regarded as exemplary.

The Daughtry Model

The final model to be examined is that of Herbert Daughtry. Though Daughtry and Brazier hailed from different Pentecostal denominations, they shared social prophetic leadership hermeneutics. Daughtry saw the church as a crucial mechanism for prophetic action and self-determination. He felt that, as a prophetic agency, the church must not divide the soul and the body. Grounding the argument in 1Thessalonians 4:23, the assertion is that just as “the soul cannot be dealt with as a separate entity divorced from the body,”⁵⁷ the church must not limit ministry to caring for the soul without simultaneously attending to the conditions that affect human life.

Daughtry founded House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn and currently serves as senior prelate over House of the Lord Churches, a Pentecostal denomination founded by his father.⁵⁸ For more than fifty years, Daughtry has led the House of the Lord in an intense vision of racial equality with particular concern for the redemption of urban

56. Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 5.

57. Brazier, 133.

58. Alexander, *The Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism*, 132.

youth.⁵⁹ Daughtry employs a Pentecostal expression of public faith that promotes radical social and political advocacy. Similar to Brazier, he is keenly concerned about the plight of urban black youth and calls for constructive action to redeem them from the clutches of low self-esteem through the affirmation of black identity. Daughtry insists that there is no difference between blackness and black Christianity. As a youth, Daughtry wrestled with the question, Is Christianity the white man's religion? His quest led him to discover that God identifies with his blackness; therefore, his Christian faith cannot be separated from his black identity.

While Daughtry today is a celebrated pastor, bishop and social activist, his early life was not one of inviolability. He was born in Savannah, Georgia in 1931, to a family of three generations of ministers.⁶⁰ His great-grandfather was a slave preacher; his grandfather was a Methodist preacher and his father was a Pentecostal preacher. When Daughtry was eleven years old, his family moved north. As a teenager, Daughtry struggled to maintain his faith amid the illicit temptations of city life. He soon lost himself to social debauchery in Jersey City and Brooklyn and swerved into a life of drugs and crime.⁶¹ In 1950, seeking to redeem himself from social corruption and searching for his lost identity, Daughtry joined the US Army. However, after a year, the army discharged him due to his addiction to heroin.⁶² In 1953, while incarcerated on charges of

59. Alexander, 133.

60. Alexander, 132.

61. Alexander, 132. St. Augustine's *Confessions* shed light on the way in which personal narrative of faith can influence theological perspectives.

62. Alexander, 132.

armed robbery and assault, Daughtry reconnected with the God of his upbringing and a self-perceived black dignity.⁶³

Upon his release from prison, Daughtry kept his promise to God to return to the church where he was subsequently ordained to ministry to carry on his family legacy. In 1958, he established House of the Lord Church, where he currently serves as pastor. In 1959, only a year from founding the Brooklyn congregation, Daughtry was appointed third senior prelate of the denomination his father founded – the House of the Lord and Church on the Mount.⁶⁴

As senior prelate, Daughtry is among few black Pentecostal bishops whose vision for ministry attends to the wellbeing of black people in a racially oppressive society. His vision includes a keen interest in urban youth development. From the beginning of his ministry, Daughtry has consistently applied principles of Pentecostal spirituality to rid black youth of social depravity. He has written copiously on the need for reorientation to the dignified black identity stolen by slavery and Jim Crow. In summary, Daughtry argues that black identity was subjugated to white supremacy and as a result, black Americans have naïvely acquiesced to historic patterns of white domination.

For decades, Daughtry has distinguished the House of the Lord Pentecostal Church as a movement for social justice and the redemption of urban youth.⁶⁵ His ministry has attracted people with broken lives, persons who share his search for answers regarding faith and its relation to black identity. The late rapper Tupac Shakur, for example, was among the troubled youth whose life was influenced by Daughtry. Tupac

63. Alexander, 132.

64. Alexander, 132.

65. Alexander, 133.

was 10 years old when his family joined the House of the Lord. Daughtry's keen interest in black youth was unconditional. He visited the 25-year-old rapper in prison only a few days before Tupac was murdered in Nevada. Illustrating Daughtry's passion for youth, Tupac's mother, Afeni Shakur, wrote,

More than thirty years ago [before 2001] accompanied by my sister Gloria, with Tupac and Sekyiwa in tow, we joined the House of the Lord Church pastored by the Reverend Herbert Daughtry. He entered my life and has become a 'rock in a weary land for me and for my family. The pastor and I have a wonderful relationship, but the bond that developed between he and Tupac can only be called remarkable.⁶⁶

The Daughtry model promotes the urgency of black consciousness in the struggle for social justice. First of all, this model nurtures a sense of dignity among a people whose identity was established through human subjugation. In other words, this model advocates for self-determination in the face of unjust social resistance. Second, the model affirms ethnic beauty and culture while attending to faith formation; it accepts ethnic and religious identities as matters of faith. Third, the prophetic dynamic of Daughtry leadership seeks to recapture abandoned social implications of Jesus's ministry as embedded in the origins of American Pentecostalism. Daughtry aptly notes,

The Pentecostal movement in America is an example of Jesus' relevance, or his contemporaneousness. Also, [it] is an example of abortive development... God demonstrated [God's] presence miraculously, in healing of all kinds, in radically

66. Herbert D. Daughtry, Sr., *Dear Tupac: Letters to a Son* (Long Island City, NY: Seaburn Publishing Group, 2001), 4. Afeni wrote this reflection in the Introduction to Daughtry's book dedicated to Tupac, *Dear Tupac: Letters to a Son*.

changed lives. But perhaps the greatest miracle was that color and class lines were broken down. Everybody was the same.... Now, if this could have continued, if men and women would have permitted God to continue [God's] work through them, we might have seen a change in American society. But, in a few years, the Pentecostal movement followed the racial and color patterns of the larger society.⁶⁷

While Lawson railed against white leaders who failed to preach racism as sin, and Brazier disparaged that many white churches were complicit in oppression, Daughtry was critical of both white and black Pentecostals for abandoning Christ's mission in favor of versions of holiness that "frowned on others who were trying to change social conditions."⁶⁸ Daughtry's practical theological approach is both voice and action; he argues that when Pentecostals became silent on matters of social injustice, "they helped to sustain that injustice."⁶⁹

The models presented illustrate strands of Pentecostalism that refused to characterize the nature of faith differently; clearly, it is a prophetic charge to *say something* and *do something* to change a society that oppresses human beings. For these pioneering pastors, the fight for social justice is inherently part of what it means to be a Spirit-filled Christian. Their legacies afford us access to a rich legacy of social prophetic leadership that will undoubtedly become ever-flowing fountains of wisdom, humility, and theological authenticity.

67. Herbert Daughtry, "Jesus: The Surprising Contemporary," in *Black Fire Reader: A Documentary Resource on African American Pentecostalism*, edited by Estrelida Y. Alexander (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 90-1.

68. Daughtry, 91.

69. Daughtry, 91.

Research Conclusions

This chapter explored the leadership narratives of four Pentecostal pastors as sources for doing public theology. Within black Pentecostalism, the progressive work of these pastors represents social prophetic ministries that took concerted action against systematic oppression. Public theology, as a sub-discipline of practical theology, should find the foregoing praxis models to be exemplary as well as instructive. Their purpose is to illustrate practices worthy of emulation. Although there are ideological overlaps, each narrative should be observed separately in order to recognize its particular contributions. Critically examining leadership hermeneutics and historical authority expands the one-dimensional understanding of the role of black Pentecostalism in Black America's social struggle. It applauds the discerning leadership hermeneutics as evident in these models. For deeper extrapolation and critical praxis, further study much be done.

Contemporary black Pentecostals are increasingly interested in connecting Pentecostal spirituality with social advocacy. Reconsidering often overlooked pastoral leadership hermeneutics has proven instructive. Moreover, while every theologian must develop her or his unique model for theological practice, lessons from these historical models constitute sources for black Pentecostal public theological praxis.⁷⁰ To borrow from theologian Elaine Graham: "Participation in the movement of the Spirit in the realm

70. David Tracy says that because there are "specific tasks of the contemporary theologian...., it becomes imperative that a theologian set forth [one's] own model for theological judgment and to compare that model critically with other existing models." David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 22. Tracy's insight is relevant to the value of historical models extracted from antecedent social prophetic black public theologians.

of reason as well as revelation is not a betrayal but a full expression of [Pentecostal distinctives].”⁷¹

The four models pointed toward bringing Pentecostal spirituality and biblical fidelity to bear on social justice engagement. The words of Wendy Dackson are appropriate here: “The church’s holiness is that of Jesus Christ himself, in its risky interaction with the world.”⁷² Additionally, the narratives of Kofi, Lawson, Brazier and Daughtry revealed the rich heritage of leadership sources for contemporary theological praxis. In Ricoeur’s treatment of “hermeneutics in action:” “It is not of course a matter of actually reliving the events that happened to others.... A new ethos is... applied to the complex intertwining of new stories which structure and configure the crossroads between memories.”⁷³ These narratives comprise but a tiny drink at the “living well” from which Pentecostal leaders might continue to draw strength and courage. In this present age and for the future, they are being equipped with Spirit-filled audacity to confront today’s Pharaohs in the prophetic words of Almighty God: “Let My people go!”

71. Graham, *Rock and a Hard Place*, 225.

72. Wendy Dackson, ‘Archbishop William Temple and Public Theology in a Post-Christian Context,’ in the *Journal of Anglican Studies* (4) (2006), 246.

73. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics of Action*, 7.

CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSION: A PRAXIS-ORIENTED PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Introduction

The results of this study confirmed blackness as a valid source for theological insight. Embedded within this context are the following: black history, black experience, black culture, revelation, scripture, tradition, and the Holy Spirit. Black life is much more than the story of a people, it is a hermeneutical resource for theological insight to inform black Pentecostal public theology.

Blackness as Contextual Theology

This research leads to the conclusion that blackness as source in Pentecostal theology is discernable as contextual theology. Bevans clarifies, “Doing theology contextually is not an option.... The contextualization of theology—the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context—is really a theological imperative. As we have come to understand theology today, it is a process that is part of the very nature of theology itself.”¹ Contextual theology situates the theological quarry deeply within lived witness. International missionaries have discovered this before now while the American theological guild sometimes remains resistant to lived witness as a theological norm.

Praxis in Faith and Life

Lived witness requires the praxis approach employed in this dissertation. The works of Bevans and Boff, along with Heitink, have been helpful. First, Bevans explains, Praxis... understands revelation as the presence of God in history—in the events of everyday life, in social and economic structures, in situations of oppression, in the

1. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 3.

experience of the poor and the marginalized. The God revealed in history, however, is not just *there*, God's presence is one of beckoning and invitation, calling men and women of faith to cooperate with God in God's work of healing, reconciling, liberating. We best know God in partnership with God.²

Stated differently, the praxis approach involves committed action and reflection, in addition to an analysis of context and rereading of scripture and tradition.³ Praxis in practice comprises commitment and intelligence in ongoing revisions of practice.⁴ It designates a theological approach that presupposes intelligent and responsible action as the utmost level of consciousness.⁵ There is a forthcoming more robust reflection of Bevans' praxis in light of this study in the next section on "Praxis-oriented Models for Public Theology."

Boff pushes the definition of praxis, explaining that it is the relationship between faith and society. This exposition has drawn upon both perspectives. Boff points out, [The] faith of [Certain Christians], with the particular vision that flows from it, has encountered the question of the theoretical and practical implications of... faith in the tissue of relationships of this or that *determinate socio-historical* area. These Christians now feel the need for an organic synthesis between their basic life option, expressed in and by the coordinates of their faith, and the historical options that, in one way or the other, they are being constrained to make.⁶

2. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 75.

3. Bevans, 76.

4. Bevans, 76.

5. Bevans, 71 and 73.

6. Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*. Translated from Portuguese by Robert R. Barr (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 5.

Boff understands that praxis serves as the necessary nexus between faith commitments and the socio-political realities that accommodate life. In his words, praxis is “the complexus of practices oriented to the transformation of society, the making of history.”⁷

Additionally, for Boff, faith is transformative only as far as it intersects with the power struggles that people endure, whether internally or socially. In any case, spiritual struggles require the mediation of faith to make sense of and to overcome. Otherwise, faith is distanced from life with no value among the faithful. As Boff puts it, “The interfacing of theology with praxis through the medium of socio-analytic mediation has as its objective the safeguarding of theology from the empty ‘theorism’ that, in certain circumstances, is a trait of academic cynicism that ignores the crying scandal of the starving and suffering multitudes of our world.”⁸ Theological praxis as the ongoing critical reflection on lived reality for the purpose of transformation keeps theology alive. Resulting theological insights are more than armchair ideas; they are living, breathing and embodied revelations for personal and public faith. Thus, praxis serves as a critical faith apparatus in public theology.

Further, Heitink draws upon the understanding of praxis as expressed in his two-praxis model. He defines practical theology as reference “to the mediation of the Christian faith (praxis 1) in the praxis of modern society (praxis 2).”⁹ Nowhere in the past two centuries has Heitink’s two-praxis model of practical theology been more pronounced than in the Black Church. Andrews’ work has already elucidated the reflexive evolution in the Black Church in which all of black life played an essential

7. Boff, 6.

8. Boff, 7.

9. Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 8.

role.¹⁰ This progression provides an illustration that supports the two-praxis model of practical theology. Black Christians have a long history of making sense of faith in light of lived realities.

Heitink rightly accentuates the mediation of the Christian faith in praxis must not be merely contemplative but action oriented.¹¹ In his view, “Although practical theology first of all focuses on praxis 1, it is always linked to praxis 2.... This link to a large extent determines the manner in which praxis 1 receives form and content. Praxis 1 can therefore never be detached from the context of praxis 2. Thus the exercise of practical theology does not have the church but rather society as its horizon.”¹² This study proves that although often misunderstood and even rejected, 20th century black Pentecostal leaders understood their brand of faith and ministry to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of equipping the church for transformational action in a hostile world.

Models for Public Theology

Scholarship has scarcely assessed Pentecostal history to determine examination of praxis-oriented leadership on matters of public concern. Black Pentecostal history of the 20th century is saturated with the struggle of faith whether in regard to the call of Pentecostal faith in personal piety or social matters of justice. This study unearthed considerations in 20th century Pentecostal leadership and presented them as models for ongoing public theological exploration.

“Models” in chapter four are praxis-oriented in the broad sense of the term. The models here are examples that draw attention to particular leadership hermeneutics as

10. See Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, Chapter 1.

11. Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 7.

12. Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 9.

revealed through narratives. Bevans sheds light on the complexity of model extraction when he says, “Models do not exist as such in ‘real life,’ or in actual articulations of theology. However, when we discern a pattern...., we might find it *useful* to identify that pattern....”¹³ Praxis models are useful for studies such as historical analyses, sociological discovery of lived patterns, and practical theological examination for revised practice.

Moreover, an explanation of what these models are not is necessary. First, the term “model” as used in chapter four does not refer to patterns and insights from the standpoint of big data analysis. Second, these models should not be mistaken as mere “role-models.” Referring to individual approaches to theological matters as models is not new. Biblical scholars refer to the “Pauline model”¹⁴ or the “Johannine model.”¹⁵ Also, in *Samuel Dewitt Proctor and Black Public Faith*, Bond speaks of Proctor as a “model” of black public theology from within the Baptist tradition.¹⁶ In each case, the term model is used similarly to its use in this chapter, as a way of lifting leaders’ methods vis-à-vis faith narratives and theological ideas.

The Kofi, Lawson, Brazier, and Daughtry models exemplify a black Pentecostal *praxis* approach to public theology. Pentecostal praxis-oriented public theology builds upon established praxis-oriented faith; it is reflexive theology-in-action that draws from the wells of Pentecostal spirituality. Its purpose is to advance a new vision of equality and holistic wellbeing.

13. Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2009), 168.

14. See Cornelius Constantineau, “The Bible and the Public Arena: A Pauline Model for Christian Engagement in Society with Reference to Romans, in *Kairos- Evangelical Journal of Theology* (V. 4) (2) (2010), 135-157.

15. Randy Poon, “John 21: A Johannine Model of Leadership” in *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* (V1) (1) (Fall 2016), 49-70.

16. See Bond, *Samuel Dewitt Proctor and Black Public Faith*, 150.

These praxis models illustrate Pentecostal theologizing from marginalized social locations with reflection on critical social concerns.¹⁷ Blackness is not absent from the leaders' theological insights and socio-political struggle. Thus, concerns are not merely Pentecostal concerns, but theological concerns for all who are oppressed.¹⁸ While black Pentecostals were widely known for the separation-from-the-world theology, it is worth emphasizing that the illustrations of chapter four imply a call to action for pastoral response to injustice wherever it exists.

A Leadership Hermeneutic

This study employs a narrative technique to explore blackness as a theological source. It illuminates elements of leadership hermeneutics from black Pentecostal pastors' life stories and ministry involvements. The movement between a pastor's life and ministry is in itself theological praxis. Moreover, praxis unearths the variety of theological intelligence and prophetic consciousness that catapulted social action employed over the 20th century.

Deliverance, transformation, and liberation are branded concepts within the Pentecostal movement. As public theologians, Pentecostal pastors can project these concepts beyond personal salvation and the worshipping community. The study of socially prophetic black Pentecostal pastors reveals that deliverance, transformation and liberation constitute the making of a public leadership hermeneutic.

17. In Bevans's taxonomy of six contextual theological models, "the praxis model gives ample room for expressions of personal and communal experience, cultural expressions of faith and expressions of faith from the perspective of social location. At the same time, it provides exciting new understandings of the scriptural and older theological witness." See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 78.

18. Bevans, 78.

Socially prophetic black Pentecostals tend to approach social struggles with the conviction that the Holy Spirit is the power the world needs to bind and deliver the spirit of social oppression, to transform diabolical systems into mechanisms for common good, and to liberate people from societal structures that hold them back from the promises of Christ to live an advantaged life.¹⁹ Early Pentecostalism attracted socially disadvantaged people who discovered dignity and hope in Christ. The pastor as public theologian interprets social disadvantage as a demonic spirit that hinders God’s children from the advantaged life for which Christ came.

The socially prophetic Pentecostal pastor gears up to lead in spiritual warfare. From this perspective, the Holy Spirit inspires holy boldness to fight evil spirits. Any type of oppression is an evil spirit. So, as much as the Spirit empowers personal spirituality and communal piety, the Spirit also empowers the Spirit-filled Christians to fight against the spirit of oppression. Holy boldness in spiritual warfare implicates concrete strategies and proposals to free oppressed people.

Accounts of these prototypical pastors reveal constant reflection upon the power of the Spirit. These pastors perceived the promises of God in light of black experience, black culture, black history, revelation, tradition and scripture. Black Pentecostal leadership should continue to exemplify elements from the spiritual reservoir of black Pentecostalism that nurture young Pentecostals.

The models in chapter four represent a range of organic expressions as sources for a Pentecostal public theology of socially prophetic leadership. There are some

19. Ref. John 10:10: “ἐγὼ ἦλθον ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχωσιν καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν.
 (“I came in order that you will have life and have advantage...” original translation by Antipas L.

Harris

commonalities, but the primary point of cohesion is preaching. Black preachers, from Isabella (Sojourner Truth) Baumfree's "Ain't I a Woman?," to Nat Turner's "I Ain't No Conjure Man," to C.H. Mason's "Storms-Storms-Storms," and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I've Been to the Mountaintop," illustrate that black public theology has a preaching foundation. It would not be surprising to discover that unsung black Pentecostal public theologians also led by preaching. They sometimes preached in order to build up their followers' faith and courage; at other times preaching was the prophetic mechanism for publicly confronting evidence of spiritual wickedness. In either case, preaching has been and remains the trademark of most black socially prophetic and public leaders.

Historically, black Pentecostal religious formation and social advocacy have rested heavily upon guidance from the leader. More study is necessary to determine to what extent pre-slave African chieftainship and indigenous religious leadership informed black religious leadership, black Pentecostal leadership in particular. This study has shown that black preachers have adjudicated community, ecclesial, and spiritual and social formation. They lead with their voices in their communities and in society on behalf of black people in general, with particular concern for their own flock.

Conclusion

This study of black Pentecostalism reveals that the movement has been socially prophetic from its inception. Early socially prophetic black Pentecostals tended to approach struggle shortly after the Azusa Street Revival. White Pentecostals split from black Pentecostals to start autonomous denominations, veering away from the social consciousness endemic to the movement. This not only split the movement but marred the Pentecostal witness regarding washing away the "color line" in the blood of Jesus.

While black people have struggled in America to live decent lives, black Pentecostals have persevered with the spirituality of their ancestors and the God that helped them survive the cruelties of enslavement. Pentecostals believe in the delivering, transforming, and liberating power of the Holy Spirit. Through all the challenges and rewards that characterized this venerable denomination, black Pentecostals have maintained the conviction that the Holy Spirit is the power the world needs to fulfill the promise of an abundant life in Christ, a conviction that remains deeply rooted in the heritage of black folk religion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“1959, April 15: Malcolm X Speech at the First African Liberation Day”. Rastafari.tv:

The Parallel Connection between Prophecy and History. Last modified February 3, 2017, 23:14:11. <https://rastafari.tv/1959-april-15-malcolm-x-speech-at-the-first-african-liberation-day/>

Alexander, Estrela Y., ed. *Black Fire Reader: A Documentary Resource on African American Pentecostalism*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013.

_____, ed. *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2011.

_____, ed. *Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism. Volume 1: North America*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018.

Anderson, Robert. *From Slavery to Affluence: Memoirs of Robert Anderson, Ex-Slave*. Edited by Daisy Anderson Leonard. Steamboat Springs, CO: The Steamboat Pilot, 1927.

Andrews, Dale P. *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Andrews, Dale P., and Robert London Smith, Jr., eds. *Black Practical Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015.

Archer, Kenneth J. and L. William Oliverio, Jr., eds. *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Archer, Kenneth J. *Pentecostal Hermeneutics for the twenty-first Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community*. New York: T&T Clarke International, 2004.

Bartleman, Frank. *Azusa Street*. Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1980.

- _____. *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It was in the Beginning*.
Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2017.
- Bevans, Stephen B. *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*. Maryknoll:
Orbis, 2009.
- _____. *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*. Maryknoll, NY:
Orbis, 2002.
- Boff, Clodovis. *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*. Translated by
Robert R. Barr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009.
- Bond, Adam L. and Samuel DeWitt. *Proctor and Black Public Faith: The Imposing
Preacher*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Touchstone, 1995.
- Brathwaite, Renea C.A. "Seymour, The 'New' Theologian: An Investigation into The
Theology of an Early Pentecostal Pioneer." PhD diss. Regent University, 2013.
ProQuest (UMI No. 3574084).
- Brazier, Arthur M. *Black Self-Determination: The Story of the Woodlawn Organization*.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.
- Browning, Don S. *A Fundamental Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press,
1991.
- Carlson Amanda B., and Robin Poynor. *Africa in Florida: Five Hundred Years of African
Presence in the Sunshine State*. Edited by Amanda B. Carlson and Robin Poynor.
Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014.
- Cone, James H. *Black Theology and Black Power*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.
- _____. *Black Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010.

- _____. *Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011.
- _____. "Sanctification, Liberation, and Black Worship." *Theology Today*: Sage Journals 35, no. 2 (July 1978): 139-152.
- _____. *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1972.
- Constantineau, Cornelius. "The Bible and the Public Arena: A Pauline Model for Christian Engagement in Society with Reference to Romans." *Kairos Evangelical Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (2010): 135-157.
- Coulter, Dale M. "Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Black Consciousness," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5, no. 25.1 (April 2016): 74-89.
- Dackson, Wendy. "Archbishop William Temple and Public Theology in a Post-Christian Context," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 4, no. 2 (2006): 239-251.
- Daniels, III, David Douglas. "The cultural renewal of slave religion: Charles Price Jones and the emergence of the holiness movement in Mississippi." PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1992. ProQuest (UMI No. 9317267).
- Daughtry, Sr., Herbert D. *Dear 2 Pac: Letters to a Son*. Long Island City, NY: Seaburn Publishing Group, 2001.
- Douglas Jacobsen, Douglas, ed. *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- DuBois, W.E. Burghardt, ed. *The Negro Church*. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1903.
- _____. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

- Florida Historical Society. "Mother Laura Adorkor Kofi." Accessed February 21, 2010.
<https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/article/106>.
- Floyd-Thomas, Stacey, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Carol B. Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield. *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Ganzevoort, R. Ruard. "Narrative Approaches." In *Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 214-223. Wiley Blackwell, 2014.
- Gerloff, Roswith. *A Plea for British Black Theologies*. Vol. 2 of *The Black Church Movement in Britain in Its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interaction with Special Reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010.
- Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. "'Together and in Harness:' Women's Traditions in the Sanctified Church." In *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., 629–650. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
- Graham, Elaine. *Rock and the Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age*. London: SCM Press, 2013.
- Groom, Thomas H. *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1991.
- Harding, Vincent. "The Use of the Afro-American Past," In *The Religious Situation*, edited by Donald R. Cutter, 829–40. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Hayes, Diana L. *No Crystal Stair: Womanist Spirituality*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016.

- Heitink, Gerben. *Practical Theology*. Translated by Reinder Bruinsma. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Hicks, Derek S. *Reclaiming Spirit in the Black Faith Tradition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *The Sanctified Church*. Berkeley, CA: Turtle Island Foundation, 1981.
- Jacobson, Douglas, ed. *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Johns, Cheryl Bridges. *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998.
- Johnson, Clifton H., ed. *God Struck Me Dead: Voices of Ex-Slaves*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010.
- Jacobsen, Douglas, ed. *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- _____. *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Press, 2003.
- John of the Cross. *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez. Washington, DC: ICS, 2017.
- Kim, Sebastian. *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate*. London: SCM Press, 2011.
- Lawson, Robert C. *For the Defense of the Gospel: The Writings of Bishop R.C. Lawson*. New York: Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, 1972.

- _____. *The Anthropology of Jesus Christ Our Kinsman*. New York: Church of Christ, 1969.
- Lincoln, C. Eric, and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Duke University Press, 1990.
- Lovett, Leonard. "Black Holiness-Pentecostalism: Implications for Ethics and Social Transformation." PhD diss., Emory University, 1978. ProQuest (UMI No. 7920612).
- _____. "Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement." *Aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Origins*, edited by Vinson Synan. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975.
- _____. "Liberation: A Dual-Edged Sword," *Pneuma* 9, no. 2 (1987):155–71.
- _____. "Perspectives on Black Origins of the Contemporary Pentecostal Movement." *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 1, no. (1973): 36-49.
- McPherson, Lionel, and Tommie Shelby. "Blackness and Blood: Interpreting African American identity." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 32, no 2. (Spring 2004): 171-192.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *The Meaning of Revelation*. New York: MacMillan, 1941.
- Paeth, Scott R. Breitenberg, E. Harold, Jr and Lee, Hak Joon, eds. *Shaping Public Theology: Selections from the Writing of Max L. Stackhouse*. Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 2014.
- Payne, Daniel Alexander. *Recollections of Seventy Years*. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969.

- Poon, Randy. "John 21: A Johannine Model of Leadership." *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 49-70.
- Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford, 2004.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Figuring the Sacred*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- _____. *Hermeneutics of Action*. Richard Kearney, ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.
- _____. *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences*. Translated and edited by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- _____. "Life in Quest of Narrative." *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991.
- _____. "Narrative Identity." In *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 73–80.
- Sanders, Cheryl J. *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Santos, Boaventura De Sousa. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Shelby, Tommie. "Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?" *Ethics* 112, no. 2 (January 2002): 231-266.
- _____. *The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Spellman, Robert C., and Mabel L. Thomas. *The Life, Legend and Legacy of Bishop R. C. Lawson*. Scotch Plains: Privately Printed, 1983.

- Stewart, Alexander. "Entreating for Justice: The Social Activism of Robert Clarence Lawson." Paper presented at the 48th International Congress of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Bishop R. C. Lawson Lecture Series, April 7, 2018.
- Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane, eds. *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Synan, Vinson, ed. *Aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Origins*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975.
- Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Volf, Miroslav. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011.
- Vondey, Wolfgang. *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Ware, Frederick L. *African American Theology: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016.
- Williams-Jones, Pearl. "The Musical Quality of Black Religious Folk Ritual." *Spirit: A Journal Incident to Black Pentecostalism* 1, no. 1 (1977): 21-30
- .
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith Through an Africentric Lens*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.